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1919



Bridgman, Michigan Lakefront postcard. [Relates to CP Conventions of May 1920 & Aug. 1922] ***PDF GRAPHIC FILE
This image should erase once and for all the false representation in the literature of the location of the 1920 and 1922 conventions of the Communist Party. The delegates didn't stay at a farm, there was no farm (no matter what Bert Wolfe may have misremembered half a century later), the conventions took place in wooded gullies amidst the sanddunes on the shore of Lake Michigan. Delegates stayed in the cabins of the the

Wolfskeel Resort, just up the road. Lakeside was about 1 mile outside of Bridgman's town center. This is a tourist postcard, undated but circa 1915, showing the view of the lakefront as the delegates must have seen it.

1919

JULY

Memorandum to Frank Burke, Assistant Director and Chief of the Bureau of Investigation in Washington from J. Edgar Hoover, Special Assistant to the Attorney General in Washington, July 29, 1919. A short memo from Mitchell Palmer's right hand man, young anti-radicalism expert J. Edgar Hoover, to the head of the Justice Department's Bureau of Investigation. Palmer names Special Agent Anatol L. Rodau as an individual who had successfully engaged in undercover work among radicals in Baltimore and asks whether he should be dispatched to Chicago to attend the foundation convention of the Communist Party of America, scheduled for Sept. 1-7, 1919.

AUGUST

"The Conference of Russian Branches of the American Socialist Party in Chicago: Organization, Representation, and Activities," by Jacob Spolansky [events of March 24 to Aug. 9, 1919] This Bureau of Investigation intelligence report by Special Agent Jacob Spolansky reviews the history of the awkwardly named creation of Alexander Stoklitsky, the "Conference of the Russian Branches of the American Socialist Party in Chicago who share the Program of the Communist Party" The Chicago Conference of Russian Branches was dominated by the Russian language branches, which contributed 36 of the 49 delegates, joined by 9 Latvian, 3 Ukrainian, and 1 Lithuanian delegate. The Chicago Conference of Russian

Branches elected delegates to the Chicago Communist Propaganda League, which Spolansky states will join with various English comrades and “pave their way for a Communist Party of America.” A constitution for the Chicago Conference of Russian Branches was adopted at a meeting held April 16, 1919. Elected Secretary of the organization was the Russian Federationist Berezhovsky. The meeting of May 21 elected 4 delegates to the June National Conference of the Left Wing (Alexander Stoklitsky, Joseph Stilson, Dr. Kopnagel, and William Bross Lloyd). Spolansky states that at the June 5 meeting “various committees to cover various propaganda lines were elected and instructions were given to those committees to pave the way for a Communist Party in America.” “The following several meetings were organization meetings of the now existing Communist Party of America,” writes Spolansky in this report, several weeks before the “founding convention” of the CPA on September 1. Spolansky provides a list of 24 Russian branches from around the country “who have adopted the program of the Communist Party.”

“Preparations for the National Convention to Organize the Communist Party of America,”

by Louis Loebel [events of Aug. 27, 1919] This Bureau of Investigation report was written by Louis Loebel, a Special Agent who worked undercover in St. Louis, attending various meetings under the guise of a radical. Loebel went to Communist Party headquarters on Blue Island Avenue in Chicago with a view to meeting I.E. Ferguson, who he had heard speak in St. Louis the week previous. Ferguson was not there at CPA headquarters, but Loebel was able to talk at length with Michiganders Dennis Batt and Oakley Johnson, learning that they expected between 280 and 300 delegates to be in attendance at the founding convention, scheduled to open on Sept. 1. Loebel spotted Hungarian communist J. Frankel in another room at headquarters, whom he had played a part in arresting in 1914, and had felt himself compelled to leave the premises rather than risk having his cover blown.

SEPTEMBER

“Communist Labor Party Convention: Day 2,” by L. Loebel [Sept. 1, 1919] This report was written by Louis Loebel, an undercover Bureau of Investigation based in St. Louis who attended the founding convention of the Communist Labor Party as a guest. Loebel passes on to his superiors a complete list of delegates successfully passing muster of the Credentials Committee, including 16 from the state of Ohio (including C.E. Ruthenberg, who departed) and 10 from New York. Loebel notes that the gathering was in limbo awaiting the return of its 5 member unity committee, appointed to seek merger with the Communist Party on the basis of organizational parity. As the committee did not return until after noon, the morning was spent composing a “Bolshevik War Cry,” an “Official Convention Yell,” and singing various songs. The afternoon was spent hearing the report of the unity committee, delivered by Jasper Bauer of California, as well as the individual reports of committee members. “Every one of them were of the belief that the members of the Communist Party were absolutely hostile to them and that the Russian delegates are controlling the situation, who are against any kind of a unity of those two parties,” Loebel reports. Consequently, late in the afternoon “it was finally decided to organize definitely and to go on with the order of business regardless of the Communist Convention.” Loebel predicts that no amalgamation of the two parties would be possible so long

as the bitterly anti-federationist John Reed and Ben Gitlow remained in the leadership of the CLP.

“Communist Party Convention: Day 1,” by James O. Peyronnin [Sept. 1, 1919] In addition to having a “confidential informant” as a delegate on the floor of the founding convention of the Communist Party of America (N. Nagorowe, Gary, IN), the Department of Justice’s Bureau of Investigation had one of its Special Agents sitting at the press table, taking notes in shorthand, and other agents mingling in the guest area. The Bol’s “journalist” was James O. Peyronnin, who contributed daily reports of the activity of the convention to his superiors. This is Peyronnin’s account of the opening day of the CPA convention. Peyronnin notes that prior to the opening, officers of the Chicago Police Department removed red decorations from the convention floor, presumably to bring it into compliance with a state or local “red flag law”—political speech not enjoying any substantive constitutional protection in this period. A local attorney acting on behalf of the CPA was summarily arrested when he remonstrated over the removal of the red signs, streamers, and bunting. The convention was opened by Michigander Dennis Batt, representing the organizing committee. Louis Fraina was elected Temporary Chairman and delivered a keynote address. The all-important Credentials Committee was elected, 7 members from a field of 18. The committee was chaired by Lithuanian Federation leader Joseph Stilson and additionally included Elbaum (Polish Fed.), Olkin (Russian), Kopnagel (Russian), Lunin (Jewish), Forsinger (Latvian), and Baltrusaitis (Lithuanian)—a clean sweep for the Federationist faction. Peyronnin estimated that 150 delegates and approximately 300 visitors were gathered for the first day’s session. The Credentials Committee reported out, a process which took 90 minutes and generated a neat list of convention delegates for Peyronnin and his superiors—list included here. Following the report of the Credentials Committee, the convention formally opened, with the Michigan faction’s Al Renner topping the Left Wing National Caucus faction’s I.E. Ferguson in balloting for Chairman of the Day. The Left Wing National Caucus’ John Ballam was elected Vice Chairman. Rules and an order of business were passed. A motion by Ferguson to establish and elect a committee of 5 to conduct unity negotiations with the Communist Labor Party group was defeated and initial dissatisfaction with Russian Federation Control began to brew, with Missouri delegate Henry Tichenor bolting for the CLP gathering and challenged Californian Irene Smith gavelled down by Chairman Renner “and interfered with by the delegates at her table.”

“Communist Party Convention: Day 1,” by August H. Loula [Sept. 1, 1919] August Loula was a Special Agent of the Bureau of Investigation who attended the first day of the founding convention of the Communist Party of America as a “visitor,” using an IWW card to gain admission. Loula reassures his superiors that “Our Confidential Informant No. 121 [N. Nagorowe], who has been directed by Division Superintendent Edward J. Brennan to attend this convention, has been elected as a delegate and is taking an active part in the proceedings, and any secret sessions of the heads of the Communist movement or any other secret procedure that may be contemplated by the radicals outside of the convention hall are concerned, will be taken care of by him.” Loula passes on the exact vote totals of the 7 leading candidates for election to the Credentials Committee, with the Polish Federation’s Daniel Elbaum leading the way with 89 votes, followed by Lithuanian Federationist Joseph Stilson with 87. The keynote speech of Louis C. Fraina is quoted at great length. “The beginning of this

movement has its roots many years back and has but now reached the stage where it can proceed as the dominant one. Our work here is to formulate the position and structure of an organization that will be the weapon by which the working class will train and organize itself for a conquest of political power. The party is here. The movement is here. It is for you to shape its structure. The Communist Party of America is a fact," Fraina declared. With regard to the Left Wingers who were to emerge as the Communist Labor Party, Fraina stated: "Events of the last few days in this city have amply established the truth of our contention that it was futile to participate in the Socialist Party Convention. The Communists who are still of the opinion that they should participate have since been forced by the contemptible acts of the rules of the Socialist Party to leave that convention. There is no question but what these Communistic elements will eventually be lined up with us. There is also the possibility that a third movement will be organized." Fraina added: "The American proletariat, I am confident, does not lack the intelligence and courage to follow the path lighted by the Moscow International to a conquest of political power."

" Communist Party Convention: Day 2," by Jacob Spolansky [Sept. 2, 1919] Report of the proceedings at the the 2nd day of the founding convention of the Communist Party of America by Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Jacob Spolansky. Spolansky sees the convention as being "ruled" by a Russian Federation clique including Alex Stoklitsky, Nick Hourwich, Oscar Tyverovsky, George Ashkenuzi, and Alex Bittelman. Always with a flair for the melodramatic, Spolansky reports that "the convention elected an Emergency Committee of 19. Before the election of this committee took place, Alex Stoklitsky and several other Russian radicals appealed personally to every delegate not to inquire as to the purpose of this committee. Employee ascertained that the real purpose of this committee is the creation of a RED GUARD." While Michigan leader Dennis Batt played a key role in organizing the convention, Spolansky states that he actually "has no influence whatever and the delegates don't pay any attention to his suggestions or motions which he makes." On the other hand, "Stoklitsky is the czar and Stoklitsky is the man who gives instructions to all the delegates how to vote. They all look upon him and as soon as he raises his hand everybody follows him." Spolansky also makes known that the Military Intelligence Division had placed one of its own as a delegate at the rival Communist Labor Party convention: "An undercover representative of the Military Intelligence [who] is attending the Communist Labor Party convention as a delegate informed Employee that Ludwig E. Martens has advanced a considerable sum of money for the organization and propaganda work of the new Communist Labor Party."

"'Bulletin No. 1' to Local Units of the SPA and SLP from C.E. Ruthenberg, Exec. Sec. of the CPA in Chicago." [Sept. 18, 1919] Immediately after formally organizing itself at its founding convention, Sept. 1-7, 1919, the Communist Party of America attempted to win adherents en masse to the CPA banner. This typeset flyer was sent to various branches of the Socialist Party of America and Socialist Labor Party, attempting to win the allegiance of entire branches and locals previously affiliated with these organizations. Noting the move for organization of a third party by the bolting delegates from the SPA convention, Executive Secretary Ruthenberg states: "It is still possible to attain unity between all the workers who are ready to support Communist principles. If every branch which stands for those principles endorses and becomes part of the Communist Party, which already has 50,000 members, no second organization can come into existence."

“Report of the National Convention at Chicago.” by John C. Taylor [Sept. 26, 1919]

First-hand account of the 1919 Emergency National Convention of the Socialist Party and the founding Convention of the Communist Labor Party from California SP State Secretary John C. Taylor, not included in volume 1 of Draper. Taylor provides the best account of Adolph Germer’s use of the Chicago police to “clear the hall” of those delegates not carrying a white card issued by Germer. Taylor charges bad faith on the part of the Germer clique in the distribution of such cards, these not being mentioned the day prior to the convention during conversation with Germer and his associates. Removed by a plainclothesman and “fully a dozen” uniformed officers already standing by, Taylor and his comrades were excluded from the hall from 10 am until after 1 pm, at which time they were only permitted to stand in an adjacent room in the heat. Taylor details the machinations of the credentials committee, which operated in slow motion until the Germer clique was certain of the stability of their majority. Taylor remarks on that several votes were decided by a tally of 88 to 33 the first day, giving an indication of the relative strength of the two factions among uncontested delegates, and details the walkout of the Left Wing delegates when the convention moved to conduct business before the resolution of all delegate contests. Taylor’s account of the founding convention of the CLP downstairs is unfortunately less valuable, emphasizing the songs sung by the delegates but providing little additional substantive detail.

SEPTEMBER

“Platform and Program of the Communist Labor Party of America.” [Adopted Sept.

1919]. This is the programmatic document adopted by the Founding Convention of the Communist Labor Party of America (CLP)—the group which emerged when the 1919 Emergency National Convention of the Socialist Party of America was successfully controlled by an “old guard” headed by National Executive Secretary Adolph Germer. The CLP founders consisted of three basic groups: credentialed delegates who bolted the SPA Emergency Convention, delegates denied access to the SPA Convention by the SPA’s Credentials Committee, and delegates who had mandate to attend the SPA Convention. This “Platform and Program” remained in effect for the CLP for the duration of its short life, from adoption in early September 1919 until merger with the Ruthenberg/Ferguson group of the CPA to form the United Communist Party of America in May

****Dues Stamp and Organizational Stamp of the Communist Labor Party.****”[pdf

graphics file, circa Sept. 1919] Specimens of a dues stamp and special revenue stamp sold to founding members of the Communist Labor Party in 1919, from a scrapbook preserved by CLP founding member W.E. Reynolds, now in the collection of Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kansas.

“Letter to John Reed and Ben Gitlow in New York from Alfred Wagenknecht in Cleveland, circa mid-Sept. 1919.” Short note from the head of the Communist Labor Party to

the editors of the CLP’s labor publication, Voice of Labor in New York. Wagenknecht indicates

that discretion is the better part of valor with respect to impeding enlistment in the army through the pages of The Ohio Socialist, when mailing privileges and a potential jail term would be in the offing. But “don’t call me an angle-worm—backboneless,” he asks, noting that “it will please you to learn that the Communists are AFRAID to publish their platform and program. Ruthenberg said to me the other day that they would probably have to circulate it SECRETLY.” Little did he know that in just more than three months the CLP, too, would be driven underground...

“America: The Foundation of a Communist Party,” by “Y.” [Sept. 1, 1919] This article from the Petrograd magazine The Communist International speaks of the formation of a Communist Party of America as an accomplished fact—in an issue with the same publication date as the opening of the founding convention of the Communist Party of America! The author, signing only with the initial “Y.”, declares that the SPA, “led by the notorious traitors to Socialism, Algernon Lee and Maurice Hillquit, has long been ripe for a split.” The issuance of the Left Wing Manifesto is heralded and quoted extensively in this article. The June 1919 National Conference of the Left Wing Section, held in New York, is mentioned, although “Y.” remarks that “unfortunately we have no information as to the decision adopted concerning adherence to the Third International. All we know is that the question was on the agenda. Nor have we any information as to the numerical strength of the party. It is quite possible that the party has not yet assumed the character of an organization of the masses.” Despite the grossly deficient state of communication, “Y.” depicts the prospects of the revolutionary movement in America in glowing colors, noting that “in the epoch of universal history upon which we have now entered, every great movement of the toiling masses and the oppressed invariably assumes a Communist form and inevitably culminates in a struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. At this juncture, America may be described as an erupting volcano. Strikes follow one another ceaselessly. In many of the states there have been armed revolts among the negroes, who demand equal rights. More than 100,000 fully armed Afro-Americans took part in what amounted to actual battles in the streets of Chicago. The revolt was led by colored ex-soldiers back from the front... We are confident that our American comrades will unite into a single stream the scattered torrents of the mass movement, that they will free it from foreign bodies, and will break the lava crust which has formed upon the surface. Then, from the rumbling volcano of the capitalist order there will escape a brilliant and mighty jet of flame which will consume all the obstacles in its path, and will crystallize, as it cools, to form a new society of labor.”

“Chicago Police Invade Hall of Communists: Red Decorations Torn Down—Lawyer Beaten Unconscious—New Party Formed.” (*NY Call*) [Sept. 1, 1919] Unsigned news report from the pages of the Socialist Party’s *New York Call* detailing the first day of the founding convention of the Communist Party of America, held at the home of the Russian Federation in Chicago and attended by about 100 delegates. The facility was stormed by Chicago police, who tore down red bunting and are said to have beaten unconscious and jailed lawyer L.M. Montgomery when he tried to remonstrate with the bluecoats. A 10 piece orchestra added atmosphere and a 20 minute keynote address was delivered by Louis Fraina, who is said to have stated that all controversies between the Communists and the Socialist Party were at an end—meaning, in the reporter’s estimation, “that thereafter the Socialist Party was to be ‘common enemy with the rest of the bourgeoisie.’” Attention is called to “the

methodical way in which the Russian Federation voted without a single exception for a prearranged slate proved to be interesting, inasmuch as it foreshadowed clearly one of the rocks on which the Communist Party is headed for a split." A further deep fissure is observed between the Michigan federation and others participating in the Communist convention, the Michiganders being "exclusively for political action, whereas the others minimize it. On the other hand, the Michigan group minimizes industrial organization as a means to revolution and does not believe in mass action at all, whereas mass action and industrial organization are considered the trump card by their present partners."

"First Convention of the Communist Party of America: Day 2," by James O. Peyronnin [Sept. 2, 1919] The Department of Justice's Bureau of Investigation had no fewer than 8, and perhaps a dozen or more, of its agents, operatives, and confidential informers in Chicago in Aug.-Sept. 1919 for the conventions of the Socialist Party, Communist Labor Party, and Communist Party of America. One of the most important was James O. Peyronnin, who apparently sat undercover as a "journalist" at the press table of the CPA Convention, and who wrote lengthy reports of each day's sessions and gathered relevant documents for Bol Headquarters in Washington, DC. These and other reports have been preserved on freely available and unexpurgated microfilm by the National Archives and Records Administration and are an exciting new historical source. The 2nd day of the CPA convention sees the acrimonious departure for the CLP convention of delegate Henry Tichenor of St. Louis, who likens the Russian Federations' machine control of the CPA gathering to the domination of the SPA conclave by the Regulars' machine: "'I have certainly had the steamroller run over me recently—once by the Berger regime in Milwaukee, and once right at this convention. It will be utterly useless for me to work with the element that is in control and therefore I ask the Credentials Committee to kindly return me my credentials.'" Chairman of the Credentials Committee Joseph Stilson announces that 128 delegates are seated (so far), representing a membership of 58,000 (the latter number certainly inflated). A surprising mass resignation takes place by the Left Wing National Caucus Faction, with a dozen or more delegates and two convention technical secretaries resigning their posts over a failure to negotiate with the Communist Labor Party's unity committee. Michigander Dennis Batt defiantly declares "I think myself the Convention will progress better without them." Following a 3 hour recess to resolve the crisis, the convention reconvenes and reconsiders its previous action, appointing its own 5 member unity committee, which included Federation chiefs Stoklitsky, Hourwich, and Elbaum in addition to Ruthenberg and Ferguson of the Left Wing National Caucus faction. Chicago police arrest Dennis Batt from the floor of the convention on an outstanding warrant for alleged violation of the Illinois State Sedition Act. A Manifesto and Program Committee is elected by the convention with Nicholas Hourwich the top vote-getter and other committees of the convention are elected as well.

"Resignations Split Ranks of Communists: Fraina and Ruthenberg Among Those Who Quit—Another Party is Formed." (*NY Call*) [Sept. 2, 1919] This report from the hostile *New York Call* notes with barely concealed glee the bitter acrimony which met the founding convention of the Communist Party of America in the second day of its founding convention. The report notes that "the Communist Party, composed of the Michigan crowd, the Russian Federation, and the former Left Wing National Council, nearly split in two when, at a concerted signal, there resigned from the important Emergency Committee of the convention Louis C.

Fraina, C.E. Ruthenberg, I.E. Ferguson, Maximilian Cohen, D. Elbaum, and A. Selakovich and, from other offices, former Organizer A. Paul of Queens and Fannie Horowitz. The issue was over sending a committee of conciliation to the 'Lefts' who had meanwhile formed the Communist Labor Party. Afraid of losing their numerical and actual domination of the convention and of the Communist Party, the Russians had throttled the proposition to increase the English-speaking element. But the scantily veiled threat of the 'Lefts' in their midst had a partial effect." The Federation group ultimately consented to naming a 5 member unity committee composed of Russian Federationists N.I. Hourwich, Alexander Stoklitsky, Polish Federationist Daniel Elbaum, and English speakers I.E. Ferguson, and C.E. Ruthenberg. "On one thing the Russians and their opponents agreed. Nobody would be permitted to join the Communist Party Convention without first passing the Credentials Committee, which consists of 7 Russians out of 7 committeemen. Also tacitly, it is agreed that under no circumstances would they admit John Reed, Ludwig Lore, Benjamin Gitlow, A. Wagenknecht, L.E. Katterfeld, L.B. Boudin, and the others who had insisted on disobeying the Russian-Michigan mandate for a Communist Party several weeks ago," the unsigned news report avers.

"Report on CLP Mass Meeting, West Side Auditorium, Chicago," by P.P. Mindak [Sept. 2, 1919] On the evening of Sept. 2, 1919, the fledgling Communist Labor Party held its first public meeting in Chicago. Undercover Bureau of Investigation Agent Peter P. Mindak was in attendance to make a report on the proceedings. The session was addressed by three CLP leaders—Ella Reeve Bloor, Jack Carney, and Jack Reed. Mindak is most enthusiastic about the ability of Irish emigré and CLP NEC member Carney, calling him "a very eloquent speaker" who made use of "a very poetic and dramatic style" to review the history of the contemporary radical movement. "He spoke of the proposed formation of the Communist Labor Party, which he stated was in wholehearted sympathy with the Russian Soviet, and urged agitation amongst the workers and the formation of shop committees throughout all the shops and factories. He urged the workers to prepare themselves for the opportunity when a proletarian dictatorship could be established in this country," Mindak states. "There appeared to be a lack of enthusiasm which is usually seen at gatherings of this kind," according to Mindak, who adds that "many of those present came for the purpose of hearing Jack Carney, who is a very eloquent orator." Literature for the IWW and Soviet buttons were available for sale at the meeting, Mindak adds.

"Communist Party of America Convention: Day 3," by Jacob Spolansky [Sept. 3, 1919] While he is the best-known of the Bureau of Investigation's undercover operatives by virtue of his melodramatic 1951 memoir, *The Communist Trail in America*, Jacob Spolansky was by no means the most important (or the most accurate) of the bevy of agents put into the field at the 1919 Chicago radical conventions. Spolansky provided to Bol headquarters in Washington this detailed account of Day 3 of the Founding Convention of the CPA. Spolansky notes the report of Press Committee chairman C.E. Ruthenberg, which called for the establishment of a party owned English language daily called *The Daily Communist*, a monthly theoretical journal called *The Communist Review*, and the establishment of a \$100,00 fund for the publication of free leaflets and other literature. The name of the theoretical journal was changed to *The Communist International* and the (wildly optimistic) dollar "limit" on the literature fund were removed by vote of the convention. The convention spent a good deal of time and energy arguing the question of whether non-proletarian elements should be allowed in the party,

ultimately approving the essence of Nick Hourwich's motion "that no man who earns a living through rent, interest, or exploiting his brother worker can be admitted into the ranks of the Communist Party. That no Federal, County, City, or Civil Service employee can be admitted into the ranks of the Communist Party" (as Spolansky summarized the motion). Another small bolt was made by Morris Zucker and Edward Lindgren of Local Kings Co., Left Wing, who purportedly received instructions by telegram from their local instructing them to leave the CPA Convention. Zucker stated he and Lindgren were leaving "because the convention was controlled by Russian elements and that other representatives have no show whatever; that caucus is being held every half an hour and the Russians have a well organized machine which has full control of this convention" and because Zucker "did not see any difference between this convention and the Emergency Socialist Convention and he was afraid that a few leaders were trying to dominate the Communist Party of America for their own selfish purposes." The departure was met in silence, Spolansky indicates. Negotiations between the 5 member unity committees of the CPA and CLP continued without any show of progress, Spolansky states, and documents exchanged between the committees were reviewed by the convention.

"Statement to the Delegates of the Communist Party Conventions by the Delegates of Local Kings Co., NY," by Edward Lindgren and Morris Zucker. [Sept. 3, 1919] With three radical conventions taking place simultaneously in Chicago during the first week of September 1919, a certain amount of shuffling of a few delegates who found themselves in the wrong place was inevitable. Two of those leaving the founding convention of the Communist Party of America in disgust were Edward Lindgren and Morris Zucker of Local Kings County, Socialist Party, with the pair bolting the CPA for the most hospitable climes of the Communist Labor Party on September 3. This is the declaration read by the pair to the assembled CPA convention upon their departure. Lindgren and Zucker are vehement in their denunciation of the Russian Federations (meaning the joint alliance of the Russian, Ukrainian, South Slavic, Polish, Lithuanian, and Latvian language groups). They declare: "Events have proven conclusively to us that this is not a genuine Communist Party; it is merely an attempt on the part of the Russian Federations to enlarge their organization and increase their power under the guise of a camouflage Communist Party." While acknowledging the sincerity of the federationists, Lindgren and Zucker were sure to "most emphatically condemn the dictatorial control of their Executive Committee over their membership — a control which it now exercises over this Convention; a control which does not hesitate to expel branches when they dare disagree with the Executive Committee; a control which will not hesitate to expel and even disrupt the Communist Party if the rank and file dare act contrary to its wishes."

"Dove of Peace Badly Treated by Communists: Two Factions Throw Charges of Treason at Each Other; Folks at Home Worried." (*NY Call*) [Sept. 4, 1919] This unsigned account from the pages of the Socialist Party daily the *New York Call* revisits the ongoing soap opera in the Communist movement to unite. The Communist Labor Party sought unification on the basis of organizational equality with the (larger) Communist Party of America, the report notes; meanwhile, "each convention declares that the other consists of inharmonious elements damned by both as centrist." The news account states that "when the CLP statement, full of counter-accusations, was read at the Communist Party convention yesterday morning there was considerable laughter. But the matter was taken up for caucus and careful consideration, for both sides realize that negotiations have reached a critical phase." Standing in the way of

easy unity were matters of personality (active dislike of some leading members of each organization with their counterparts), the “strenuous objection to the domination of the Russian Federations” by the CLP, and organizational rules adopted by the CPA which would exclude from membership CLP leading light William Bross Lloyd and others deriving the whole of their income from rent, profit or interest. CPA convention committee members are listed, as is the New York delegation to the Communist Party’s convention. The claimed representation of 14,900 New York members of the CPA is said to have been characterized as “grossly inflated” by both the Socialist Party and the rival CLP.

“First Convention of the Communist Party of America: Day 4,” by James O. Peyronnin [Sept. 4, 1919] Undercover Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Peyronnin recounts the affairs of the 4th day of the 7 day Founding Convention of the CPA. Extensive and heated debate took place over a constitutional provision to require the splitting of locals over 500 members into smaller branches (ultimately stricken) and requiring all language branches to join their appropriate Federation (ultimately approved). The report of the Education Committee, calling for a 3 member National Educational Committee, the establishment of “Schools of Communism” for general theoretical education and the training of party members as speakers and organizers, and the establishment of a National Lecture Bureau for the routing of speakers. The entire content and tone of this report is very much in the vein of the old Socialist Party of America, it should be noted. The inability of the Manifesto and Program Committee to report to the convention drew the pique of convention chairman Al Renner (Michigan faction), who pointed out that there were delegates needing to depart shortly. The convention shut down for the day shortly after noon due to the inability of any committees to submit their reports to the body. Presumably committee work was conducted in the afternoon hours.

“Polish Communist Meeting, Walsh’s Hall, Chicago,” by P.P. Mindak [Sept. 4, 1919] In contrast to the tepid mass meeting of the CLP held the evening of Sept. 2, Bureau of Investigation undercover agent Peter Mindak indicates that the mass meeting of Polish CPA members and supporters held 2 nights later was a rousing and enthusiastic affair, attended by 700 or 800. The keynote speaker was Daniel Elbaum, editor of *Głos Robotniczy* [The Voice of the Workers] of Detroit, with Translator-Secretary of the Polish Federation Joseph Kowalski chairman of the meeting. Elbaum “explained to the gathering the purpose and program of the Communist Party and that this party represented the revolutionary element of the Socialist Party. His speech had a very powerful effect on the audience, as at the conclusion the applause lasted for several minutes,” Mindak reports. In his remarks, Kowalski is said to have taken aim at the American Federation of Labor, ridiculed as an organization which had outlived its usefulness. “The meeting was one of the most enthusiastic Polish Communist gatherings which Employee has so far attended and shows that the leaders of the Polish Communist movement have been and still are very active in spreading the Communist Party and organizing,” Mindak notes.

“Minutes of the Founding Convention of the Communist Labor Party of America, Aug. 31—Sept. 5, 1919.” After fighting for control of the 1919 Emergency National Convention of the Socialist Party of America in Chicago and losing in their bid, the organized Left Wing

Section of the SPA retired downstairs and held a convention of their own—a gathering which established the Communist Labor Party of America (CLP). The body elected organizational officers and wrote and adopted a platform and program. This document collects the minutes of every session of the CLP convention held over the six day period.

"Constitution of the Communist Labor Party of America" [adopted Sept. 5, 1919]

Complete published edition of the organizational law of the Communist Labor Party of America, passed by its founding convention on September 5, 1919. Owing to the speed and severity of government repression of the Communist movement, these rules barely had a chance to take effect before being supplanted of necessity by an underground form of organization. One sees what the hardliners of the rival Communist Party of America were talking about when they condemned the CLP as "centrist," as the form of organization and its procedures were clearly borrowed wholesale from the Socialist Party of America. Of particular note is the state-based form of organization, election of delegates to national conventions by the state organizations, provision for membership referendums on matters of controversy, and establishment of a "Young People's Communist League" to replace the SPA's "Young People's Socialist League." Membership is open to all those 18 years or older, with former members of the SPA in good standing as of the September convention considered members in good standing of the CLP without the necessity of paying a \$1 initiation fee, upon the signing of a new organizational pledge card. The same "Translator-Secretary" structure employed by the Socialist Party is ported over to the new CLP, with the establishment of five branches speaking a non-English language sufficient for the establishment of an official CLP language federation and the organization committed to provide office space in the National Office to the federation's Translator-Secretary upon the attainment of 1000 members.

"First Convention of the Communist Party of America: Day 6," by James O. Peyronnin [Sept. 6, 1919] In this Bureau of Investigation report, Special Agent James Peyronnin notes that the morning of the 6th day of the Founding Convention of the CPA was occupied with paragraph-by-paragraph consideration of the proposed program of the organization—based upon the draft prepared by Louis Fraina and the Left Wing National Council faction rather than the alternative prepared by the Socialist Party of Michigan. While 2 days earlier chairman of the convention Al Renner (Michigan) had been eager to push the pace of the gathering, now he strongly objected to a proposal to move to electing officers of the CPA. Peyronnin notes that Renner "stated that there are certain delegates who are struggling for time in which to put something over; that the reports of the committees should by all means be acted upon before the election of officers." Peyronnin adds that the proposal to move to elections by Left Wing National Council faction member Isaac Ferguson, "who seemed now to be in unity with the Russian Revolutionary Organization to control the convention", was carried, and the process of nominations and elections moved forward. Four International Delegates (and 4 alternates) were elected, as was a 15 member CEC (with 5 alternates). Michigan faction members declined all nominations, notably Renner for Executive Secretary (Ruthenberg elected) and Batt for National Editor (Fraina elected). In the night session of the convention, Dennis Batt took the floor and excoriated the "100% Bolsheviks" of the Russian Federations for the "junk which you threw on the table for the delegates to pass on" (i.e. the Fraina version of the party program). "Batt in his discourse was very incitive and expressed himself with much force," Peyronnin notes. The complete Michigan program was read into the record. Batt was forcefully answered

by Alex Bittelman on behalf of the majority, comparing the two programs “practically paragraph for paragraph.” “In course of his inflammatory remarks, Batt vacated the hall for the balance of the night,” Peyronnin reports.

“Communist Party Mass Meeting: Douglas Park Auditorium, Chicago,” by Louis Loebel [Sept. 6, 1919] Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Louis Loebel briefly reports to his superiors in Washington on the mass meeting of the CPA held in Chicago the evening of September 6. “From all appearances, it was a Russian Affair pure and simple, the English speakers, Ferguson and Ruthenberg addressing the audience for conventionality’s sake, rather than with a view to convey their messages to the English speaking audience. It is a fair estimate to state that 99% of the crowd were Russian, Lithuanian, and Polish,” Loebel states. In addition to the two English speakers, Alexander Stoklitsky addressed the gathering in Russian, A. Forsinger in Latvian, and Boleslaw Gebert in Polish.

“Proclamation to the Delegates and Members of the Communist Party by the National Executive Committee of the Communist Labor Party.” [Sept. 6, 1919] First of many unity appeals by the leaders of the Communist Labor Party to the rival Communist Party of America. The CLP’s NEC declares: “As far as we can discover, there is no fundamental difference of principle between us. The platform, program, and resolutions that our convention has adopted are uncompromisingly revolutionary. They conform to the Left Wing program and are in strict accord with the principles laid down by the Communist International of Moscow. We are affiliating with the Third International. We hereby announce that we are ready at any time to meet your representatives to consider the question of unity on a basis of equality.” Therein lay the rub. With the CPA sporting roughly triple the membership, annoyed that the CLP had not abandoned the clearly failed strategy of capturing the Socialist Party, and populated by neo-Social Democratic “Centrists,” there was no comparable mood for unity -- particularly upon any “basis of equality,” wherein party jobs would be split evenly and the CPA’s semi-autonomous Federations placed in jeopardy.

“First Convention of the Communist Party of America: Day 7,” by James O. Peyronnin [Sept. 7, 1919] Bureau of Investigation Special Agent James Peyronnin reports on the 7th and final day of the Founding Convention of the CPA. The report of the Resolutions Committee was presented by S.A. Kopnagel and was approved by the convention without discussion. P. Sparer reported for the Committee on the Young Peoples Communist League, the proposed youth organization of the CPA (never launched). George Ashkenuzi and Bert Wolfe resigned from the Central Executive Committee to make way for Harry Wicks (breaking factional discipline with his Michigan comrades) and Charles Dirba. The finance committee reported that a total of 137 delegates had been seated at the convention, with nearly \$5900 collected thus far on registration fees and all but \$100 of the amount spent on delegate train fares and building rent. Translator-Secretary of the Lithuanian Federation Joseph Stilson indicated that the new organization would be receiving approximately \$10,000 from the various Federations as the portion of dues withheld from the Socialist Party’s National Office during the faction fight of 1919. At the conclusion, C.E. Ruthenberg seems to have addressed the convention at length as the new Executive Secretary of the CPA, deprecating the efforts of the rival Communist Labor

Party, whose list of 90 delegates was seriously padded, including 7 who “did not represent anyone to speak of”; 10 from New York, a state in which Ruthenberg states that he did not think there were more than “a couple of hundred” in support of the CLP; and 11 from Illinois, were “not more than a few hundred at the very best represent them.” Ruthenberg declares “The only sound organizations they have behind the delegates who were in that convention were Washington, California, and Oregon. And we have delegates here on the floor representing those states.” Special Agent Peyronnin states in conclusion that “on account of the antagonism and friction existing between certain groups of the Convention, the ultra-radicals, who are the real ‘Bolshevists’ in the United States, did not deviate to any extent from the actual business of the convention, but these radicals, with especial reference to the group representing the Russian Revolutionary Organization from New York, should be kept under surveillance in their activities in behalf of the Communist Party, and which organization with the other foreign element of the Convention practically controlled the Convention from its inception to end.”

“In Re: Communist Party Convention,” by N. Nagorowe [events of Sept. 1-7, 1919] In its first great anti-Communist intelligence coup, the Department of Justice successfully placed one of its “Confidential Employees” on the floor as a delegate at the Founding Convention of the Communist Party of America. This individual was neither Louis C. Fraina nor Harry M. Wicks (about whom there have been hushed whispers and furtive glances over the years; neither of whom were on the Bol payroll by any indication), but was rather the Russian delegate elected by Branch 2, Gary, Indiana, N. Nagorowe. This extensive report by Bureau of Investigation employee Nagorowe is an extraordinarily important historical document, containing a first person account of the closed door caucus activities of the Russian Federations faction. According to Nagorowe, the various language federations were driven by the action of the Russian Federation, disciplined and united fresh from their Federation Convention in Detroit held just the previous week. The chief of the faction is said to have been Translator-Secretary Alexander Stoklitsky, a man of few words at the caucus meetings. Stoklitsky’s verbose and doggedly persistent front men are said to have been Novyi Mir editor Nick Hourwich and top Jewish Federationist Harry Hiltzik. Also playing a key roll was CEC member and Latvian Federation chief John Schwartz, characterized as “a resolute rough leader of the mob.” The Left Wing National Council faction is interestingly characterized as the “Fraina group” by Nagorowe. Nagorowe is particularly important for his description of the 3 way dance between the Federations with the “Fraina group” and the “Michigans”—in which the Michigan draft program seems to have been abruptly and faithlessly dropped in favor of the Fraina-drafted program as the working basis for the CPA program by the top leadership of the Federation. Stoklitsky and Hourwich failed “even to give any intimation of it to their own caucus members” this drastic change had been made, Nagorowe notes. The entire situation was masterfully handled Stoklitsky & Co., Nagorowe indicates, with open split with either the Left Wing National Caucus or the Michigan faction avoided and merger with the Anglophonic “Centrists” of the Communist Labor Party skillfully managed and ultimately avoided.

“Minutes of the Central Executive Committee of the old Communist Party of America, Sept. 7, 1919.” The first physical meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the old CPA was held in Chicago immediately after the conclusion of the founding convention of the organization. Attended by 14 of the 15 individuals elected by the Convention, the CEC elected five additional members to join Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg and Editor of Party

Publications Louis Fraina on an “Executive Council”: I.E. Ferguson, Charles Dirba, K.B. Karosas, John Schwartz, and Harry Wicks. The CEC named the Executive Council as the party’s legal bureau and committed to undertake the legal defense of Dennis Batt, naming Isaac Ferguson as party legal counsel. Ferguson was also named Associate Editor of Party Publications. A standard party wage of \$45 for those with families and \$35 for single employees was established. The New York members of the CEC were named a subcommittee to organize a NY state district, with Max Cohen as secretary of the organization committee. The CEC agreed to conduct its ongoing activities by mail through executive motions with the next physical meeting set for October 1. Party funds were to be deposited in a bank account under the name of C.E. Ruthenberg, with I.E. Ferguson a necessary co-signer for all party checks—a decision which would eventually haunt the CEC when Ruthenberg and Ferguson bolted the party in April 1920, taking with them thousands of dollars in misappropriated CPA funds.

“Constitution of the Communist Party of America: Adopted at the Founding Convention, Chicago, Sept. 1-7, 1919.” Basic document of organizational law of the old Communist Party of America. Structurally similar to the apparatus used by the Socialist Party of America—the basic unit of organization being the “branch” of at least 7 members, combined into a “City Central Committee” if more than one existed in a locale (the SP basing itself on the city-level “Local” which may or may not be subdivided into “branches”). These CPA branches and City Central Committees were to be combined into either state or (at the discretion of the CEC) industrial district organizations. In all there were two or three layers of organization between the individual member and the governing 15 member CEC. An inner circle of the CEC called the “Executive Council”—all living in the specified headquarters city of Chicago and consisting of the Executive Secretary, Editor, and 5 members of the CEC—were to handle day to day operations of the party. Also notable in this organizational structure was the fact that the Executive Secretary and Editor were to be elected annually at party conventions held in May or June and that there were to be no members-at-large.

“Circular Letter to All Russian Branches of the Communist Party of America from Alexander Stoklitsky in Chicago, Sept. 8, 1919.” Immediately after the conclusion of the Founding Convention of the CPA, Translator-Secretary of the Russian Federation Alexander Stoklitsky dispatched the following circular letter to the various branches of the Russian Communist Federation detailing the activities of the convention. Stoklitsky uses a low count for the number of delegates credentialed (128; actual number seems to have been 137, according to the Finance Committee’s report late in the convention). He announces the publications launched by the convention—the weekly organ (The Communist) and the monthly theoretical magazine (The Communist International) and details the names of those elected as International Delegates and members of the organization’s CEC. Stoklitsky declares that “the work of the construction of the Communist Party of America has been crowned with success. The old, rotten Socialist Party has cracked at all its seams. All thinking elements have joined the fighting Communist Party of America.” He adds that “a difficult task lies before our party. Surrounded on all sides by enemies, it will be obliged to fight on many fronts simultaneously”—including particularly “the Germans and the Bergers,” brothers of the German Social Democratic “traitors” and “social-patriots,” who “are ready to do all in their power in order to crush the real Revolutionary movement.”

“Circular Letter to All Ohio Locals and Branches from Alfred Wagenknecht, Executive Secretary, Communist Labor Party.” [circa Sept. 10, 1919] The failure of the two Communist conventions in Chicago to unite created an intense and bitter political situation — referred to in this circular letter by top CLP leader Alfred Wagenknecht as an “emergency.” This communication to the membership until recently comprising the Socialist Party of Ohio attempts to justify Wagenknecht and the Ohio delegation’s course of action, reveals to these rank-and-filers the fait accompli of its new membership in the Communist Labor Party, and calls upon them to “maintain our strong Ohio organization and loyally cooperate with the efforts of new party officials to build a powerful national organization.” New dues stamps and cards are said to be ready, based on a dues rate of 50 cents per month, and the constitution of the CLP adopted in Chicago is to be in effect “until such time as it is amended by referendum,” Wagenknecht declares.

“Russia—The World’s Greatest Labor Case: A Speech in San Francisco,” by Robert Minor [Sept. 14, 1919] Texas born, California dwelling cartoonist and journalist Robert Minor was one of the first-hand American observers of the Russian Revolution. For the better part of a year he lived in Moscow, interviewing Lenin, contributing a cartoon to Pravda, and attempting to fulfill his journalistic obligations in spite of suppression of his various cables to America. Once home, Minor toured and spoke extensively on behalf of the Russian Socialist Republic. This is the text of Minor’s second speech in America, made in San Francisco late in the summer of 1919. Minor charges that Soviet Russia is the victim of the greatest of labor frame-ups, a “conspiracy to falsify the facts” on the part of governments and their diplomats working hand in glove with the bourgeois press. Soviet violence was exaggerated and depicted in the lurid accounts, while the greater violence of the anti-Communists went largely unreported. Minor tells his audience to “dismiss from your minds the lies that have been told on the score of the ‘red terror.’ Perhaps 4,500 or 5,000 people were killed under the ‘red terror.’ For that reason Russia is to be excluded from all consideration, they say. Look on the other side of the fight. Not less than 76,000 were killed by the ‘white terror’ and you never heard of it.” Minor makes the provocative claim far from American being threatened by the virus of Bolshevism, to the contrary it was American that was radicalizing Soviet Russia. Minor asserts that he “ran across these American-Russians everywhere, and every one of them who has been here got his political education and has no illusions, knows all the potentialities of this country.” It was these American-Russians who were “the most radical of all.” The St. Louis stockbroker-turned-diplomat David Francis was dismissed by Russians as an “old stuff shirt,” Minor declares, while the “one American representative in Russia who understood and saw” was YMCA man Raymond Robbins, “a capitalist of the kind that can understand a few things and see ahead.”

“Old Local Queens [NY] Votes to Leave Socialist Movement: Report of Meeting of Sept. 14, 1919.” This news report from the New York Call details the exodus of Local Queens from the Socialist Party as the result of a decision made at the membership meeting of September 14, 1919. The session received the report of Maurice L. Paul, a delegate to the founding convention of the Communist Party of America, who declared asserted the decision of Local Queens to send him to the CPA gathering was the correct one. “The Socialist Party

Convention was packed. For example, New York was represented by 36 delegates, whereas 36 delegates is out of all proportion to the true representation. The Communist Convention and the bolters' convention, or Kangaroos [the CLP], was made up of such comrades who fluctuated one way or another and knew not where to go." After hearing Paul's report, Edward Lindgren reported on behalf of the Communist Labor Party, who claimed the CLP delegates were attempting to fulfill their mandates to attend the Socialist Party's Emergency Convention; as opposed to the CPA, which Lindgren stated was dominated by the federations and thus "could never amount to much in this country as a revolutionary party." Jay Lovestone also spoke on behalf of the CPA. "His remarks were mostly personalities, and of all the speakers of the evening he seemed most bitter," the account notes. After extensive debate on a series of amendments, Local Queens voted 39-8 to join the Communist Party of America.

"Strength of the Two Left Wing Parties." (*Communist Labor Party News*) [circa Sept. 15, 1919] This short article pronounces the Communist Labor Party's view of the membership status of the CPA and CLP at the time of their formation. The article correctly notes that "only an estimate of the strength of each can be given at this time for the exact membership can not be ascertained until both organizations have functioned for some months and then only upon the basis of dues stamp sales." The CPA is said to consist largely of members from the language federations: "Russian, 6,500; Ukrainian, 3,500; South Slavic, 3,000; Lithuanian, 6,000; Lettish [Latvian] 1,500; Hungarian, 2,400; Polish, 2,000," plus "a few thousand English-speaking members" for a total estimated membership of the Communist Party of "about 28,000." This estimate is reasonable. The count of its own CLP organizational ranks is highly inflated however, based upon Anglophonic state memberships plus "the greater portion of the German Federation membership, with a Left Wing of" about 5,000, plus "the Italian Federation, 1,000; and the Scandinavian Federation, 3,000." Thus, "the membership of the Communist Labor Party equals, if it does not exceed, that of the Communist Party," the article writer optimistically (and wrongly) declares.

Circular to All Branches of the Russian Federation of the Communist Party of America from Oscar Tyverovsky, Secretary. [circa Sept. 15, 1919] In this communique from the first days after the split of the Socialist Party of America into 3 competing organizations, Secretary of the Russian Federation Oscar Tyverovsky offers the Communist Party of America's perspective of the dispute. Tyverovsky is harshly critical of the Communist Labor Party element for not joining with the Communist Party of America after the outcome of the Socialist Party convention became clear on its first day, Aug. 30, 1919. These delegates disregarded the fact that the CPA organizing committee had agreed to accept those delegates who would be willing to submit to the requirements governing the delegates of the Communist Convention, i.e., to pass the Mandate Commission." Instead, they formed their own dual communist political organization, the CLP — a group which Tyverovsky characterizes as "a party of leaders without [the masses]." Tyverovsky notes that these "so-called communists" had admitted to their organization branches of the Russian Federation which recently been expelled by the Russian Federation "because of their Menshevik tactics and disorganizing activities." Instead of making known the real differences in the orientation of these two wings of the Russian Federation, Tyverovsky states that the CLP was instead exaggerating an artificial issue, the question of control over the Russian Soviet Government Bureau of Ludwig Martens (which the CLP supported and worked with and the CPA sought to subordinate to its own party

control). The CLP also made use of their “backbiting, lying paper, Pravda” to slander the Russian Federation, Tyverovsky charges, adding that “we must stand fast at our post, not allowing the evil-doers to disrupt our ranks.”

“Introduction to the Official Report of the Chicago Convention,” by John Reed and Benjamin Gitlow [circa Sept. 15, 1919] Close political associates Reed and Gitlow, hardline anti-Russian Federation folk, provide here an introduction to an official publication of the Communist Labor Party detailing the events of its founding convention for its members. The pair call for an end to the six months of “ceaseless bickering” between Right and Left which dominated discourse in the old Socialist Party and which now seemed to be continuing between the CLP and the rival Communist Party of America. “The vast bulk of the Party membership, we are sure, from whatever part of the country it may come, is with us. Our Convention, in which there were regularly elected delegates from 22 states — including the solid West — proves that the revolutionary rank and file of the old Socialist movement in this country has lined up with the Communist Labor Party,” Reed and Gitlow declare. They add that Federation autonomy has been eliminated in the CLP, whereas in the CPA no language branch could remain a member without first being a member of its associated language group. The CLP stood ready to unify with the CPA, however, Reed and Gitlow noted, despite four rejected appeals for unity on an equal basis made to the CPA in Chicago.

“Historical Review of the Split in the Socialist Party and the Organization of the Communist Party and Communist Labor Party. [Sept. 1919]” An official review of the split in the Socialist Party and division of the Communist movement in two new organizations from the perspective of the Communist Labor Party. Authorship is unknown, but the document appeared in the CLP’s official organ, Communist Labor Party News, and was reprinted in the CLP-affiliated press. Onus for the division is placed squarely on the shoulders of the Communist Party of America, which broke ranks with the will of the Left Wing National Conference and then “refused to elect a committee on unity to confer with the committee elected by the Left Wing delegate convention” “changing this decision only when faced by a bolt of about 40 delegates from their own convention. The CPA, said to be “controlled” by “the Russian Federation” and run by means of “dictatorial methods” then refused to unite with the CLP on the basis of equality, but instead sought control of the new organization by uniting on the basis of declared memberships. The claim of the CPA to represent 55,000 members is contested by this article; instead the CPA included only 24,900 Federationists and “two or three thousand English-speaking members” while the Communist Labor Party represented the Socialist Parties of 23 states as well as the German, Scandinavian, and Italian Federations—30,800 in all.

“Call for a Mass Membership Convention For the Purpose of Organizing Local Cook County of the Communist Labor Party of America.” [Sept. 1919] . A rare leaflet held in the Comintern Archive, a call by the provisional Cook County, Illinois, CLP organization for a “Mass Membership Convention” to establish “Local Cook County, Communist Labor Party of America.” All those pledging allegiance to the program of the CLP and submitting an application for membership were to be entitled to participate at the organizational convention, to be held Sunday, Sept. 28, 1919. Includes the organizational principles and program of the CLP, an illuminating view of the ideology of the party’s early participants. Published over the

signatures of the Cook. Co. Organization Committee: G.A. Engelken, Arthur Procter, J. Meisinger, Sam Hankin (Sec.), and John Nelson.

“Convention Impressions,” by William Bross Lloyd. [Written Sept. 1919]. An account of the preliminary political jousting and formation of the Communist Labor Party by a founding member of that organization. William Bross Lloyd, a millionaire, was one of the financial angels of the American radical movement during the last years of the 1910s. In this article, published in *The Class Struggle*, he harshly criticizes the Left Wing National Council of Ruthenberg, Ferguson, & Co. for having exceeded its authority when it collaborated with the Language Federations and Socialist Party of Michigan in calling for immediate formation of a Communist Party of America. Lloyd is particularly blunt with regards to the “Russian Federations,” which he characterizes as “a machine just as pernicious as the old SP National Executive Committee. That is the situation which is the fundamental cause of disunion today.” If there is unity between the CLP and the CPA, Lloyd states, “it will come because self-seeking politicians and their power of control have been eliminated.”

“‘Bulletin No. 1’ to Local Units of the SPA and SLP from C.E. Ruthenberg, Exec. Sec. of the CPA in Chicago.” [Sept. 18, 1919] Immediately after formally organizing itself at its founding convention, Sept. 1-7, 1919, the Communist Party of America attempted to win adherents en masse to the CPA banner. This typeset flyer was sent to various branches of the Socialist Party of America and Socialist Labor Party, attempting to win the allegiance of entire branches and locals previously affiliated with these organizations. Noting the move for organization of a third party by the bolting delegates from the SPA convention, Executive Secretary Ruthenberg states: “It is still possible to attain unity between all the workers who are ready to support Communist principles. If every branch which stands for those principles endorses and becomes part of the Communist Party, which already has 50,000 members, no second organization can come into existence.”

“The Communist Party,” by Jack Carney [Sept. 19, 1919] This article by Duluth, Minnesota Left Wing iconoclast Jack Carney, a member of the National Executive Committee of the Communist Labor Party, takes aim at his rival Charles Dirba and the Communist Party of America. Carney had in the previous week asserted that “The majority of the English-speaking membership” which the CPA had was “drawing away from it” and State Secretary Dirba had taken exception, asserting that “common decency and honesty demands that you retract this misstatement.” Carney sticks to his guns, writing “If you want to judge the membership of any party, just judge them by their actions, not their TALK. There has been more work done in the city of Duluth than in both of the Twin Cities. We have sold more literature than the State Office, which has the whole membership to serve. The Scandinavian Local has practically kept the State Office above water. This has been made possible because within the Socialist Party of Duluth there has been unity of purpose and unity of action. We have not engaged in talk so much as action. True it is that we have not used many revolutionary phrases, but we have gone to the place where the worker was reached and that was on the job.” Carney seeks unity of Communist forces: “There is no Communist Party that has a right to say that WE are the only party. The times call for more tolerance and they call for the exercising of our common sense in

these matters. We must come together. If you are prepared to stay in your own little party, then you are lost to all sense of a conscious realization of the task that is set before you.”

“In Re: Communist Meeting at West Side Auditorium, Chicago,” that is set before you Reports by Peter P. Mindak and Jacob Spolansky [Sept. 21, 1919] Two Bureau of Investigation reports on the mass meeting held in Chicago in the afternoon of September 21, 1919, by the Communist Party of America. According to Special Agent Mindak, about 800 or 900 persons were in attendance, “most of whom appeared to be Russians,” to hear speeches by Harry Wicks and C.E. Ruthenberg (in English), J. Kaminski (in Polish), and Alexander Stoklitsky (in Russian). Mindak singles out Wicks for special mention: “This speaker assailed the President in most violent terms, and his entire speech, it can be safely said, was the most revolutionary and fiery talk that employee has yet heard. He called all the police and other peace officers as being all thugs cutthroats, and pimps. He could not find words powerful enough to portray his contempt and animosity. He advocated the organization of the workers in the various shops, to prepare themselves for the time, which he stated was at hand, when the workers will take the plants in their own hands as they did in Russia.” Ruthenberg is said to have delivered “more of the old time Socialistic anti-Capitalistic talk and was tame in comparison with the talk of Wicks.” Mindak states that Stoklitsky was the most effective speaker, resoundingly greeted by the assembly. The Russian-speaking Spolansky adds a note on the content of Stoklitsky’s speech, noting that he “worded his speech to the coming strike” on Sept. 22. As is his wont, Spolansky luridly adds that Stoklitsky “stated that the steel strike, which is going to start on September 22nd [1919] will become a general revolution, and that the Communist Party, whose aim is to bring about this revolution in this country should make every possible effort to explain to the steel strikers that proclaiming getting more wages for shorter hours is not the thing to fight for. He stated that they must fight for the establishment of communism through the proletarian dictatorship.”

“‘Not Goodbye, Just Change,’ Says [Alex] Georgian.” (NY Call) [event of Sept. 21, 1919] On Sept. 21, 1919, a meeting was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota to honor Russian-American Socialist activist Alex Georgian, who was slated to be transported to Ellis Island, New York for eventual deportation. Georgian was greeted with an ovation by his comrades before telling them: “Deportation is not a new thing. It has existed since the exploitation of man was introduced into society. It was so in Russia, and it is so in England, France, and all over. Deportation is a social crime by the master class to subjugate workers. I am not the first, and I will not be the last. Deportation will exist as long as the capitalist class.... Because of the prosecution and oppression visited upon the workers of Russia, Russia is in the vanguard of progress. The same thing is coming here, and they can’t crush it. This is not a farewell, just a changing of place. I have always been in the struggle, and am going to talk whether they send me to China, Germany, or Hell.” A footnote by Tim Davenport notes that Georgian was ultimately freed on a writ of habeas corpus and remained undeported throughout the early 1920s—eventually playing a major role as a member of the dissident Ruthenberg faction of the Communist Party of America and serving as a delegate to the 1922 Bridgman convention under the pseudonym “Kasbeck.”

“Application for Membership in the Communist International on Behalf of the Communist Labor Party of America,” by Alfred Wagenknecht [September 21, 1919]

Succinct application for Comintern membership by the Executive Secretary of the Communist Labor Party of America, acting in accord with a resolution passed unanimously at the founding convention of the party, which closed Sept. 5, 1919. The resolution states: “We hereby declare ourselves one in principle and actions with all the parties and organizations already affiliated with the Third International formed at Moscow, and send them our heartiest greetings. We pledge ourselves to work upon the lines and according to the program determined upon by the first Congress of the Third International...” By way of contrast, the Communist Party of America applied for Comintern membership on Nov. 24, 1919, and the Socialist Party of America applied for Comintern membership on March 12, 1920.

“Letter of I.E. Ferguson in Chicago to A.M. Rovin in Detroit,” September 23, 1919. A historically important and illuminating document from the Comintern archives. This lengthy letter from National Left Wing Council Secretary and CPA founding member I.E. Ferguson answers a hostile interlocutor and defends the decision to move to an immediate September 1 launch of the Communist Party of America. Ferguson charges that the Communist Labor Party resulted from “the trickery of about a dozen reckless men who were in the strategic position to mislead about 30 delegates who really belonged in the Communist Party Convention but were purposely kept away by misinformation.” As for the remaining members of the CLP founding convention, Ferguson calls them “drifters of one kind or another, men and women incapable of decision, and at the moment representing no membership and no set of principles.” Aside from the question of programmatic differences between the CPA and the CLP, the issue of so-called “autonomous federations” is discussed, with Ferguson defending the CPA’s federation model as “realistic, yet uncompromising so far as the principle of party centralization is concerned.”

“The Communist Party Convention,” by I.E. Ferguson [Sept. 27, 1919]. Ferguson, a prominent member of the Left Wing National Council, founding member of the Communist Party of America, and editor of that party’s official organ provides a lengthy and detailed account of the founding of the CPA, published in the pages of *The Communist* for the benefit of CPA members. Ferguson’s account makes clear that the gathering was anything but monolithic—he emphasizes the division of the organization between three groups: the Michigan faction, the Language Federationists headed by Alexander Stoklitsky, and the Left Wing National Council group. Ferguson emphasizes that the latter favored a softer line with regards to the participation of bolting delegates from the Socialist Party Emergency National Convention and serious unity discussions with the emerging Communist Labor Party group—a position which was defeated by the convention in a test of strength. Includes a very useful list of elected officials of the CPA using “real” names.

“Letter to Edward S. Smith in Warren, OH from C.E. Ruthenberg, Executive Secretary, Communist Party of America in Chicago, Sept. 30, 1919.” Short note from Executive

Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg to an activist in Warren, Ohio which notes the overwhelming decision of a delegated convention of Local Cuyahoga County [Cleveland] to affiliate with the Communist Party of America over the Communist Labor Party, by a vote of 178 to 3. The

Cleveland local was by far the largest in the state of Ohio, which was regarded as the center of the CLP's activities — indicating a grim political situation for the CLP from the outset.

“Large Section of Old Local [Cuyahoga County, OH] Back in Party (NY Call) [event of Sept. 28, 1919] Brief news account from the Socialist Party's New York daily detailing the visit of party NEC member William Brandt to a large Sept. 28, 1919, gathering of Local Cuyahoga County, Ohio—the massive local organization from which both Communist Party Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg and Communist Labor Party Executive Secretary Alfred Wagenknecht hailed. Brandt had been denied the right to address the gathering on behalf of the Socialist Party, which limited presentations to the two rival Communist organizations. CLP NEC members Wagenknecht and Alexander Bilan spoke on behalf of the Communist Labor Party and Ruthenberg had spoken on behalf of the CPA. Debate followed, after which the gathering voted overwhelmingly for the affiliation of Local Cuyahoga County to the Communist Party—the CLP astoundingly mustering only 3 votes of support. The vote for affiliation prompted an immediate bolt of a small number of loyalists to the Socialist Party, who proceeded to reorganize as Local Cuyahoga County, Socialist Party, with former Cleveland City Council member John G. Willert as Secretary. NEC member Brandt assured the rest of the SPA's NEC that “the English membership was with the party, as was the membership of the Jewish and Finnish branches,” according to the news report. “Brandt estimates that while 25 percent of the membership is inclined toward the Communist Party, at least 25 percent is loyal to the Socialist Party, with 50 percent indifferent. He feels that the better part of this 50 percent can be brought into the Socialist Party,” the report optimistically continues.

OCTOBER

Boycott the Elections! Proclamation of the Communist Party of America, Local Greater New York.” [c. Oct. 1919] (Graphic pdf, small file) One of the first leaflets issued by the Communist Party of America following its formation in the summer of 1919, this by its “Local Greater New York” organization. The Left Wing Section of the Socialist Party had become the Communist Party of America in August, the leaflet states, but many of its members had already entered the primary elections against Socialist Party Regulars, some winning. Resignation was impossible after the primary date; thus, some Communists would be appearing on the New York ballot under the Socialist Party's arm-and-torch logo. These candidates “DO NOT WANT YOUR VOTES!” the leaflet proclaims. Instead, the CPA calls for a boycott of the elections by the working class. Participation in the “blind alley of capitalist elections” would be merely a diversion of the revolutionary energy of the proletariat, the leaflet asserts. “Workers, the United States seems to be on the verge of a revolutionary crisis,” according to the leaflet. The CPA's task is said to be the unification of mass strikes of the workers and developing them into “political strikes,” thereby challenging the “very power of the capitalist state itself,” the leaflet explains. A short ad at the bottom announces that the official organ of Local Greater New York, CPA, “The Communist World,” is available “at all newsstands” weekly (sic.) for a nickel.

“The Three Parties,” by L.E. Katterfeld [October 1919]. An official CLP history of the division

of the American marxist movement into “three parties” “the Socialist Party, the Communist Party of America, and the Communist Labor Party of America. Katterfeld portrays the division of the movement into reformist and revolutionary camps as a fundamental opposition of viewpoints with the split being reproduced around the world. As for the split of the American revolutionary section, Katterfeld states that the germ was planted by the partial suspension and expulsion of the Left Wing Section by the NEC of the Socialist Party. A Conference was held in Chicago where it was agreed to continue the fight within the SPA, but “within two weeks the Michigan-Russian Federation coalition violated this joint agreement and began boosting for a separate party.” The matter came up again at the National Left Wing Conference in New York, where the majority again agreed to carry on the fight “until the natural climax in convention.” A third meeting, that of the new NEC of the Socialist Party, held in Chicago on July 26 reaffirmed this decision. Although both Louis Fraina and C.E. Ruthenberg were at this last meeting and supported the decision, “within a week they flopped” and endorsed the call for an immediate convention regardless of the outcome of the internal Socialist Party fight. “Then the *Revolutionary Age* turned a somersault and began to play its financial masters’ tune by abusing as ‘centrists’ all those that did not join it in its flop.” This was the cause of the split between CLP and CPA, a division which Katterfeld stated was not based upon any “fundamental difference of principle.” The CLP stood ready “at any time, anywhere to meet on a equal basis of Comradeship” with the CPA to forge unity, Katterfeld noted.

“Communist Party Convention,” (A Michigander Perspective) [events of Aug. 30-Sept. 7, 1919] There are numerous primary accounts of the founding conventions of American Communism. The greatest number deal with the high-profile split at the Socialist Party convention, which lead to the formation of the Communist Labor Party. A lesser number deal with the establishment of the Communist Party of America at the convention of its own, called for Sept. 1, 1919 in Chicago. Of these few, the only one written from the perspective of an adherent of the ideologically-distinctive Socialist Party of Michigan seems to be this one—published in *The Proletarian*, the official organ of the Michigan party and the Proletarian University of America. The unnamed author of this report emphasizes that there were 3 fairly compact caucuses at the CPA convention: “The largest group of the convention was the Russian caucus group, made up of the Russian-speaking elements, including Poles, Lithuanians, Letts [Latvians], Ukrainians, and others.” Second was “the Fraina-Ferguson caucus,” consisting primarily of anglophonic elements associated with the National Council of the Left Wing. The third group, “generally referred to as the Michigan group,” was composed of “delegates from Muskegon, Grand Rapids, Grand Lodge, Jackson, Detroit, Buffalo [NY], Rochester [NY], Cleveland, Rockford, Ill., and Chicago,” the author indicates. This latter group, consisting of approximately 20 delegates to the convention, remained united in support of a minority program and platform written in accord with the distinct teachings of the Michigan organization, which rejected any notion of mass action by a conscious minority, instead arguing for the necessity of minority support for any revolutionary action.

“The Chicago Conventions,” by Max Eastman; Drawings by Art Young. [Oct. 1919]. [Large file—1 megabyte] At the end of August and first of September, there were three monumental conventions of the American left simultaneously taking place at Chicago: the 1919 Emergency National Convention of the Socialist Party of America, the Founding Convention of the Communist Labor Party, and the Founding Convention of the Communist Party of America. No

more than a small handful of people attended sessions of all three bodies and only one chronicled them with a journalist's touch and a historian's eye. This lengthy analysis of the three gatherings by Max Eastman is a seminal piece of reportage—absolutely indispensable for historians of the Debsian SPA and the early American Communist movement. First published in the pages of *The Liberator* in its October 1919 issue, this is the revised version of the article, adding many of the original sketches and pen-and-ink drawings by Art Young. Those with slow internet may alternatively download the [text-only version](#).

“Fifty-Seven Questions Answered,” by the National Office, CLP. [Oct. 1919]. Frequently Asked Questions of the National Office regarding affiliations of individuals and full SP Locals and Branches to the newly organized Communist Labor Party—published in order to minimize the amount of costly individual correspondence that needed to be conducted on these matters. Affiliations of SP Locals and Branches were to be automatic upon majority vote; Socialist Party dues stamps were no longer to be valid after Nov. 1, 1919; uniform dues for individuals and couples was to be 50 cents per month (with allocation of this amount specified); new members were to pay a \$1 initiation fee; and the Communist Labor Party News was to serve as a temporary membership bulletin until a regular publication could be launched.

“The Capitalists Challenge You, Workingmen! Proclamation of the Communist Party of America.” [Oct. 1919] This is one of the first agitational leaflets produced and circulated by the Communist Party of America, directed at striking steel workers in Gary, Indiana. In response to what had been a successful strike, troops were dispatched to the city, which the Communist Party attempted to make into an object lesson of the nature of class rule: “The Steel Trust was in danger of being beaten. It might have to submit before the power of the workers. To save itself it brought into the field the instrument forged by the capitalists to uphold their system of exploitation and oppression, the State, which in spite of all its democratic pretensions is but the physical expression of the Dictatorship of the Capitalist Class. WORKINGMEN OF THE UNITED STATES, THE CAPITALISTS ARE CHALLENGING YOU! They are demonstrating before your very eyes that the governmental power is theirs, for use against you when you dare strike against the enslavement which they force upon you.”

“Circular Letter to All Branches and Locals of the Communist Party of America from C.E. Ruthenberg, Executive Secretary, Oct. 7, 1919.” This recently-surfaced circular letter by CPA Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg outlines his party's side of the argument with the Communist Labor Party over the question “Who is blocking Communist unity?” Ruthenberg unhesitatingly declares the fault lies with the CLP, the leaders of which asserted falsely that “the decisions of the Left Wing Conference called for a third convention, and, logically, for a third party.” These leaders went to Chicago fully intending to hold a convention of their own to establish such a third party, Ruthenberg asserts, although they did not have the courage to announce this intention to the party membership. Ruthenberg reveals that at the caucus of the Left Wing delegates to the Socialist Party held the evening before the convention convened, he introduced a resolution “binding them to enter the Communist Convention immediately after they bolted from the Emergency Convention”—a resolution which was voted down. A similar motion the next day making unity with the Communist Convention the first order of business

was similarly rejected, Ruthenberg states. The Communist Convention merely sought bolting delegates to submit their credentials to the Credentials Committee the same as any other delegates, Ruthenberg says. "Previously the Organizing Committee and the Left Wing Council had declared to these delegates that all those delegates who had credentials for both the Emergency Convention and the Communist Convention would be included in the roster of delegates that would organize the convention, and the spirit of the convention toward the other bolting delegates was shown in the seating without question of 4 delegates from Minnesota because their State Organization had endorsed the Left Wing Program, although they had no definite credentials for the Communist Convention." This very reasonable position was rejected by the delegates who formed the CLP, he indicates, which demanded all-or-nothing acceptance of all delegates on the basis of organizational equality. Ruthenberg declares that "Communist Unity is still possible. The delegates of the Communist Labor Convention are responsible for the organization of a third party. If they are Communists in principle let them step aside. If they desire unity of the Communist elements in the United States, let them disband their Executive Committee and urge every local to join the Communist Party."

"Letter to Fred Walchli in Bellaire, Ohio, from L.E. Katterfeld in Cleveland, Ohio, October 12, 1919." Reply by CLP Organization Director Ludwig Katterfeld to an Oct. 6 letter from Walchli condemning the alleged statement of Tom Clifford that "We want to make the Communist Labor Party 100% American." Katterfeld states that he was next to Clifford at the meeting in question and that what Clifford actually said is that "We want to build an *American* Communist Party." Katterfeld points out that far from being nativist, all five members of the CLP National Executive Committee were foreign-born. Statements of CLP election strategy and the reason for no formal endorsement of the IWW in the CLP platform are included. Katterfeld also indicates that it was as yet impossible to determine the numerical strength of the two Communist Parties, as "not until the individual member affiliates with a Party by paying his dues can you claim him as a member," He states that 20,000 CLP dues stamps had been distributed to date.

"A Visit to Communist Party Headquarters, Chicago," by A.H. Loula [Oct. 14, 1919]" This document chronicles a visit by Bureau of Investigation Special Agent August Loula to the national headquarters of the Communist Party of America, located at the so-called Smolny Institute on Blue Island Avenue in Chicago. Loula states that the CPA is "very actively engaged in spreading its anarchist propaganda throughout the country" and lists its leaders as Louis Fraina, Alex Stoklitsky, Nick Hourwich, Ed Ferguson, Joseph Stilson, C.E. Ruthenberg, Joseph Kowalski, and Fred Friedman. He notes in his report that his superiors had instructed Loula to "keep in constant touch with the activities of the above-named renegades" and he states that "their activities are carefully being watched." In response to a complaint by an officer in Central Division Military Intelligence about a CPA leaflet "pamphlet reeks with sedition and anarchy," Loula visited CPA headquarters to investigate. After some verbal jousting with Ferguson and Ruthenberg, Loula obtained some copies of the leaflet in question, "The Capitalists Challenge You, Working Man." "I later read the pamphlet and have come to the conclusion that it does not contain matter upon which prosecution could be based by this Department," Loula indicates."

“Circular Letter to the Members of the Communist Party of America from C.E. Ruthenberg, Executive Secretary, Oct. 15, 1919.” This letter from Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg to the members of the Communist Party of America declares that the organization is “alive to the present struggles of the workers” and will “aim to enter actively into every struggle of the workers.” By its deeds, the fledgling CPA would demonstrate that its slogan declaring itself a “party of action” is “no idle boast,” Ruthenberg states. In practice, these deeds of the young organization consisted of the coordinated distribution of leaflets—available for \$1.50 per thousand from the party’s national office in Chicago. “The Capitalists Challenge You, Workingmen” was to be distributed in the second half of October 1919; “Declaration of the Communist Party on the Blockade of Russia” from Nov. 1 to 9; and “Your Shop” for the balance of November. “Action, and more action, comrades, that must be our goal. Begin a widespread distribution of these Communist Party leaflets. Each one, while dealing with specific problems contains the argument for Communist principles. Our party will grow strong and powerful as we show ourselves worthy of support of the workers. Make the party what it should be by active participation in this literature campaign,” Ruthenberg implores.

“CLP Officials Arrested.” (*Communist Labor Party News*) [event of Oct. 16, 1919] This short news article notes the arrest of a number of CLP leaders when attempting to organize the party organization in Cleveland. These included: “L.E. Katterfeld, organization director and member of the National Executive Committee; E.T. Allison, editor; Walter Brunstrup, Cleveland CLP Secretary; Charles Baker, organizer; and A. Wagenknecht, Executive Secretary of the CLP, were arrested Thursday, October 16th [1919] and charged with violating the criminal syndicalist law.” The article declares: “The assault upon the party by the masters’ menials will spur every CLP member to double duty for the party. Defense funds must be secured. Strength in organization must be developed. Every attack by the hysterical opposition must be met by additions to our ranks and greater determination for an early victory.”

“To the Striking Longshoremen: Proclamation Issued by the Communist Party of America, Local Greater New York.” [leaflet circa Oct. 20, 1919] Full text of one of the very first leaflets of the American Communist movement, a proclamation to striking New York longshoremen by the New York Communist Party. The leaflet attempts to draw parallels between the longshoremen’s strike and the steel strike and to identify the state with violence on behalf of the capitalist exploiters: “How then can you expect to receive a square deal from the Bosses’ Government?! The Government will place squads of soldiers on the piers, with rifles and machine guns to shoot you down. If you hold your ground they will establish martial law; they will break up your meetings; raid your homes, arrest you—just as they are doing to the steel strikers in Gary now. In other words, they will try to crush your spirit, break your solidarity with your fellow-workers, and send you back to work like a lot of beaten dogs.” Dismissing the possibility of amelioration, the leaflet declares that “The only way is to get rid of the present Bosses’ Government and establish a Workers’ Government in its place. A Workers’ Government like the Soviet Republic of Russia. The present Government is a government of the capitalists, by the capitalists, for the capitalists. You must aim for the establishment of a Workers’ Republic of workers, by the workers, for the workers.”

“The Socialist Apostle Speaks,” by Nicholas I. Hourwich. [Oct. 25, 1919] This article in the official organ of the Communist Party of America attacks the perceived duplicity of Morris Hillquit’s second article on the factional war, “We Are All Socialists,” [Sept. 22, 1919], in the immediate aftermath of the Chicago party split. Hillquit’s chastening of his comrades for “infraction of Socialist ethics and decency” in the attack on the Left Wing is dismissed by Hourwich as paternalistic patter—the zealous attack of the Left in the bourgeois press is viewed as being uniform behavior by the “social-opportunists and the social-reformists of all lands” in their effort to prove their “ability” and “respectability” to the bourgeois public. An interesting example of the vehement antipathy held for the archetypical centrist social democrat Hillquit by many on the revolutionary left of the American movement.

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“Communist Labor Heads Arrested! Infamous Freeman Act Again Used to Crush Political and Industrial Activity Among Ohio Workers,” by Joseph W. Sharts [event of Oct. 16, 1919] News account from the (Regular) Socialist Party of Ohio official organ, the *Miami Valley Socialist*, edited by Joseph Sharts of Dayton. Sharts notes the Oct. 16 arrest of 5 prominent leaders of the Communist Labor Party in Ohio under the state’s criminal syndicalism statute, the ironically named “Freeman Act.” Those arrested included Alfred Wagenknecht, National Secretary of the new Communist Labor Party; L.E. Katterfeld, national organizer of the CLP; Elmer T. Allison, editor of *The Ohio Socialist*; Charles Baker, state organizer; and Walter Brunstrup, Secretary of the Cuyahoga County Committee of the CLP. Sharts characterizes the arrests as the “latest incident of the White Terror in Ohio” and declares that “everyone personally acquainted with these radical leaders knows that if they spoke at any meeting they were careful to avoid making statements that would violate the Freeman Act.” Sharts notes that the Freeman Act was also being used to battle unions on behalf of the employers, citing the recent arrest of 9 striking coal miners in Harrison County, members of the United Mine Workers Union. Sharts calls for Ohio workers to make use of the initiative process to overturn the Freeman Act via the ballot box.

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immediate aftermath of the Chicago party split. Hillquit's chastening of his comrades for "infraction of Socialist ethics and decency" in the attack on the Left Wing is dismissed by Hourwich as paternalistic patter—the zealous attack of the Left in the bourgeois press is viewed as being uniform behavior by the "social-opportunists and the social-reformists of all lands" in their effort to prove their "ability" and "respectability" to the bourgeois public. An interesting example of the vehement antipathy held for the archetypical centrist social democrat Hillquit by many on the revolutionary left of the American movement.

"Executive Motions of the Central Executive Committee of the old Communist Party of America, Oct. 23, 1919." As was the case with the rival CLP, the Central Executive Committee of the old Communist Party of America initially used the mails rather than frequent physical meetings to make its organizational decisions. This document from the Comintern Archive details the results of Motion #1 (to approve reply to CLP on unity—passed) and Motion #2 (To postpone the next physical meeting of the CEC from Nov. 1 to Dec. 20—failed). It also reveals the limitations of this slow and tedious method of making decisions, with Motion #3 (to delay the reply to the CLP approved by Motion #1) arbitrarily terminated by Executive Secretary Ruthenberg to prevent a defeated minority from arbitrarily halting action, and Motion #5 (calling for International Secretary Fraina to delay his letter to the Comintern until after the next physical meeting of the CEC) announced as being moot, the letter having already been sent. Motion #4 (to delay the next physical meeting of the CEC from Nov. 1 to Nov. 15 to allow members to be in their cities to help conduct Nov. 7 Revolution Day activities had to be voted on by wire due to the proximity of the Nov. 1 date and the need to make necessary travel arrangements to Chicago. The motion to delay ultimately passed.

"Communists Unite: An Appeal to the Rank and File of the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party," by Elmer T. Allison [October 29, 1919] Front page editorial from the October 29, 1919 issue of *The Ohio Socialist*. Allison, editor of the Ohio Socialist (and brother-in-law of Communist Labor Party Executive Secretary Alfred Wagenknecht, makes an appeal to the rank and file of the rival Communist Party of America (CPA) and Communist Labor Party of America (CLP) to push their leadership to organic unity of the two organizations. "The rank and file of both sections see no fundamental differences between the two parties. And there are none," Allison declares. Allison proclaims that the Communists of Cleveland are a microcosm of the movement across the United States, split up into two competing camps. This situation needs to be brought to an end, in Allison's view, and he advocates that the rank-and-file of both organizations demand unity of the two organizations. "If any stand between unity of the two Left Wing elements, throw them out, brand them for what they are, ENEMIES OF THE WORKERS," Allison insists.

"National Executive Committee of Communist Labor Party Meets: Establishes Communist Labor as Official Organ and Makes Class Struggle Magazine and Voice of Labor Official Publication of Party—Takes Over Publishing Business of the Socialist Publication Society." [Meeting of Oct. 25-27, 1919] Account from the official organ of the Communist Labor Party detailing the second gathering of the party's governing National Executive Committee. The sessions were attended by the entire NEC: National Secretary

Alfred Wagenknecht and NEC committeemen Max Bedacht (San Francisco), Alexander Bilan (Cleveland), L.E. Katterfeld (Cleveland), Jack Carney (Duluth), and Edward Lindgren (Brooklyn). The group heard an organizational report by Wagenknecht, in which he stated that a total of 6,788 charter (initiation) stamps had been ordered to date, plus 14,976 monthly dues stamps and 657 dual husband/wife monthly dues stamps. State organizations were chartered in 9 states, with several others due to follow in short order and additional unorganized states to be divided into regional districts. The group addressed the ongoing unity discussions with the Communist Party of America and established an editorial board and an array of publications, including a new bi-weekly official newspaper to replace *Communist Labor Party News* called *Communist Labor*. Max Bedacht was named editor of this publication. The NEC voted to absorb the backstock of publications of the Socialist Publishing Society, including the theoretical magazine *The Class Struggle*, and to issue this magazine and other future publications in its own name. Ludwig Lore was named editor of *The Class Struggle* and Jack Carney and A. Raphaeloff were elected associate editors. The session also voted to move party headquarters from Cleveland to New York, effective in November 1919.

NOVEMBER

Hands Off Soviet Russia! A. Raphaeloff [November 1919] First agitational leaflet of the Communist Labor Party of America, published and distributed early in November 1919. With the mere existence of the Soviet Republic nearly certain to inspire emulation, the capitalist nations of the world were engaged in a joint effort to destroy the workers government, Raphaeloff asserts, with Woodrow Wilson joining the effort as the “faithful servant of the American plutocracy.” Raphaeloff notes the refusal of workers in Great Britain, France, and Italy to aid the military action of their governments against Soviet Russia under the slogan “Hands Off Soviet Russia!” and encourages American workers to do likewise. Writes Raphaeloff: “You must know that every American soldier sailing for Russia goes there to shed the blood of the Russian workers and peasants who are now engaged in a desperate struggle against the capitalists of the world... You must bear in mind that every rifle, every cannon, every machine gun which is being sent from the United States to Russia means death for the many Russian workers and peasants who are sacrificing themselves in order that the workers the world over may be liberated from the yoke of international capital.” Workers were refusing to load supply ships bound for Russia and Soldiers refusing to go to the Russian front. “American workers, you must follow their example!” Raphaeloff insists. He proposes the slogan: “Not a soldier for war against Soviet Russia, not a cent, not a rifle to help wage this war.”

“The Communist Labor Party,” by Ludwig Lore [Nov. 1919] This editorial from the final issue of *The Class Struggle* announces the transference of this publication to the fledgling Communist Labor Party. Lore indicates that the split in the Socialist Party was “a foregone conclusion for months past. There was but one alternative. Either the Socialist Party must be forced to abdicate its advocacy of pure and simple politics; either it must resolve to become the exponent and the leader of the fighting vanguard of the American working class upon the economic and political field, or an organization would have to be created to take its place.” Lore acknowledges that “many sincere Communists are of the opinion that the split came too early,” but notes that “the situation exists, and has to be met as it is and not as some of us would wish it to be. The CLP is in the field and is here to stay.” Lore details the CLP’s perspective on the

relationship between the working class and the organized vanguard of leaders acting in its behalf: "The CLP recognizes that the emancipation of the working class must be the work of the workers themselves and that no set of leaders can achieve it for them. But it also knows that revolutionary changes in society are not brought about by the masses, but by a determined and clear thinking minority, by the most advanced and trustworthy element in the proletariat." He notes that only organizations standing squarely for the "dictatorship of the proletariat" like the CLP can be admitted to the Third International and further remarks on the very different perspective of the SPA and the CLP on the question of political action, in which the CLP would seek to elect its representatives not to legislate, but to educate the masses. Lore remarks only briefly upon the "saddest of all" disunion of Communist forces in America, blame for which he assigns to the refusal of the Communist Party of America to "admit those of Left Wing delegates who had no credentials for the Convention called for September 1st." "The CLP is convinced that eventually there must and will be only one communist political organization in this country," Lore declares.

"Your Shop." [Communist Party of America Propaganda Leaflet No. 3, printed Nov. 1919] A very early propaganda leaflet of the old CPA, revolutionary in content, urging workers to "organize and make it your shop." The Russian workers were the model, they "organized their power" then, "when the crisis came they were prepared to use their mass power." The first step was for American workers to organize shop committees, according to the leaflet. "Bring together all the enlightened workers who are ready to participate in the struggle to win control of the shop. Organize them in a Communist Party shop branch.... The work of the committee will be to unite all the workers in the shop in a shop organization" and thus begin to prepare to take control of their shop, work, lives, and happiness. Some 250,000 copies of this leaflet were produced.

"Workers, Free Yourselves!" by Floyd C. Ramp [circa November 1919] Apparently a speech delivered by early member of the Communist Labor Party Floyd Ramp upon his release from Leavenworth Penitentiary. Ramp remains unbowed and unbroken: "I lost my citizenship when I went to Leavenworth but I retained my self-respect. They have robbed me of my right to vote, and they have classed me with degenerates and other inferiors, but they will know before I am through with them that I am a citizen and that I believe enough in the welfare of my country to work unceasingly for its improvement." Ramp defends his heartfelt patriotism with the flag-waving jingoism of the 100% Americans. "I believe I love this great country just as much as any man who was ever born within its borders. I do not think that keeps me from understanding the needs of other people and I believe I can best prove that patriotism by joining hands with the workers of the world to overthrow the system of society that has taught us to hate each other and has kept us at each others' throats for these thousands of years and that has just left us as a credit to our bloody work—50 million victims," Ramp emphatically declares.

"Letter to Floyd Ramp in Leavenworth Penitentiary, Leavenworth, KS, from L.E. Katterfeld in Cleveland, Ohio, Nov. 1, 1919." Letter from the Organization Director of the newly formed Communist Labor Party to the soon-to-be-released Oregon Socialist Floyd Ramp, seeking his affiliation with the CLP. "I feel sure that you agree fundamentally with the

CLP and therefore do not hesitate to ask you to cast your lot with us. The Party is steadily gathering strength and is gradually winning out over both the others. We shall move headquarters to New York within a few weeks. Have taken over the Voice of Labor and The Class Struggle magazine with the full stock of pamphlets and books of the Socialist Publication Society and we are tackling the job of educating America's 30 million wage workers in all earnestness. Will you help with that task?" Katterfeld asks. Ramp did indeed join the CLP upon his release.

"Boycott the Elections! Proclamation Communist Party Local Greater New York."

[Nov. 1, 1919] This proclamation of Local Greater New York, Communist Party of America, attempts to explain the incongruous situation which arose when a handful of supporters of the Left Wing Section of the Socialist Party won primary election victories over adherents of the SPA's Regular faction, thus appearing on the November ballot as Socialist candidates for election, despite their subsequent joining of the Communist Party of America—an organization which had called for a boycott of the 1919 elections. The proclamation notes that "The Left Wing Section having now become the Communist Party, these nominees tendered their resignations from the Socialist Party ticket. But, according to the election laws, such resignations could not be accepted after primary day. Therefore, some Communist Party members will appear on the Socialist Party ticket, BUT THEY DO NOT WANT YOUR VOTES!" The CPA's national party program is cited, which asserts in no uncertain terms "participation in parliamentary campaigns, which in the general struggle of the proletariat is of secondary importance, is FOR THE PURPOSE OF REVOLUTIONARY PROPAGANDA ONLY." (emphasis in original). A strike wave of revolutionary import was sweeping the country, the proclamation notes, with steel workers, longshoremen, building trades, milliners, and printers on strike. This was of primary importance, not the elections, the proclamation declares and the slogan of "Boycott the Election!" is advanced.

"Bylaws of Local Greater New York, Communist Party of America." [Nov. 1, 1919] State and federal law enforcement authorities portrayed the new Communist Party of America as a violent menace to American government, at odds with the norms not only of democracy, but human society itself. These first by-laws of the "open" New York City unit of the CPA reveal an organization closer in nature to the Kiwanis Club than to a pack of bloodthirsty bombthrowing nihilists. All joking aside, these by-laws were clearly closely modeled after those of the Socialist Party's Local Greater New York, being based upon a City Central Committee formed on the basis of 1 delegate for each branch of the party, with an additional delegate for each 50 members in good standing. Local Greater New York was to be headed by an 11 member Executive Committee elected by the City Central Committee, an Executive Secretary [Harry Winitsky, with other officers including a Recording Secretary and Treasurer. Delegates to the City Central Committee and officers of Local Greater New York were to serve for a term of 6 months and were to be subject to recall by the bodies which sent them. Duties and procedures of all officers and the conduct of meetings are spelled out in detail.

"The Red Evening': Bureau of Investigation Report on the Mass Meeting Held at West Side Auditorium, Chicago," by Jacob Spolansky [Nov. 1, 1919]" This brief report

by Special Agent Jacob Spolansky details the visit of “Confidential Informant #43” to a special meeting attended by an estimated 1700 Communist Party members and Left Wing sympathizers at West Side Auditorium in Chicago. Lithuanian Communist M. Ruchilis was chairman of the proceedings, which featured a Latvian orchestra and Latvian and Lithuanian choruses. The keynote address was delivered by former Translator-Secretary of the Russian Socialist Federation, Alexander Stoklitsky. Stoklitsky acknowledged that “there will be many comrades of ours in prison, tortured, killed, but that should not stop you. There has been no freedom won without sacrifices, and tonight we are assembled here for the purpose of extending our proletarian solidarity to the working class our Russia—our brothers. We pledge our lives for the great cause of Communism. So onward, comrades, in the name of Communism, onward! In the name of the final triumph of the international proletariat—onward!”

“New Jersey Party News,” by Walter Gabriel [events of Nov. 1-2, 1919] This brief news account by State Secretary of the “open” New Jersey unit of the Communist Party of America details the origins of that particular state organization, which was based just across the river from New York City. The New Jersey CPA organization was formally launched at a convention held in Newark on Nov. 1 & 2, 1919. There were 62 delegates in attendance from 41 of the state’s 53 branches, which claimed a total membership of 1,678. Walter Gabriel of Newark was elected the paid State Secretary, Louis Brandt elected State Organizer, and headquarters established in Newark. Affairs of the New Jersey state organization of the CPA were to be governed by a 15 member State Committee, meeting monthly, which would in turn name a 5 member State Executive Committee, to meet weekly. A state constitution was adopted and resolutions passed by the convention, including one resolution “pledging the State Organization to initiate the work of forming ‘factory-shop committees,’ these to function under the control of the City Central Committees and to be composed of Communist Party members only.”

“What’s the Matter with America?” by John Reed [Nov. 5, 1919] The most famous member of the Communist Labor Party of America sounds off in the party weekly *The Ohio Socialist*. Reed states that America had begun 1919 as “one of the most reactionary nations on earth.” Workers were sated with “war-wages,” the radical opposition had been “privately and publicly mobbed into comparative silence,” President Woodrow Wilson and AF of L boss Samuel Gompers were each riding waves of personal popularity and power. Towards the end of the year, by way of contrast, Wilson had been exposed as a phrase mongering hypocrite, Gompers and his craft union orientation had done nothing to ameliorate the lives of the workers and had come to face opposition even in his own organization, and the working class of the country was stirring—organizing and striking as a defensive measure to fight the effort of the employing class to roll back wages to pre-war levels. “But the workers...cannot wait. They must get relief: they strike. The leaders forbid. They strike anyway—they *must* strike. And this struggle between the masses forced to move forward, and the ‘leaders’ who want to hold them back, reveals to the workers the reactionary character of the whole Craft Union structure, and its function as a buttress of the capitalists’ system.” “So Revolutions begin—so the Revolution is rapidly approaching here in the United States,” Reed concludes.

“Speech in Celebration of the 2nd Anniversary of the Russian Revolution: Hunts

Point Place, New York City [excerpt], by Benjamin Gitlow [Nov. 7, 1919] November 7, 1919, was the occasion of half a dozen or more celebratory meetings in New York City as well as in other large metropolitan areas across the country. One of the New York City meetings, in addition to being addressed in Russian by Ludwig Martens of the Russian Soviet Government Bureau and his office manager, Gregory Weinstein (a member of the CLP), heard a speech by Benjamin Gitlow—soon to be a celebrated victim of government persecution. A stenographer employed by the Department of Justice's Bureau of Investigation transcribed the bulk of Gitlow's speech, which was preserved in the Bureau's archives and is reproduced here for the first time. "Two years ago today the Bolsheviki went into power in Russia, in 1917; and today in Russia the Bolsheviki are no longer in power, but the working class the world over is today in power in Russia," Gitlow tells the assembly. Capitalists the world over were afraid of the new Bolshevik government in Russia, according to Gitlow, because "they know that the workers' government of Russia is not a national government representing Russia alone, but that it is the government of the entire working class and that it is challenging today the entire world order of capitalism." "The workers the world over, despite the lies of their capitalist papers, despite the false promises of their crooked politicians, despite the sermons of their ministers, despite the wisdom of their college professors, must determine to follow the example of the Russian workers and do everything in their power to stop intervention in Russia," Gitlow declares.

"Communist Party's Soviet Celebration Plans are Cancelled: Committee in Charge Calls Off Meeting Following Hylan's Criticism." [Nov. 8, 1919] In the aftermath of the Oct. 8 crushing of the peaceful march of 2,500 anti-blockade protesters and the Nov. 7 violent raids on New York headquarters of the IWW and the Russian People's House, the Communist Party of America learned of police plans to halt its scheduled public celebration of the 2nd Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution at Rutgers Square and decided that discretion was the better part of valor. "The cancellation came shortly after a letter from Mayor Hylan to Police Commissioner Enright, denouncing the members of the party and calling upon the police to curb their activities, had been made public," the terse notice on the front page of the Nov. 8 issue of the New York Call announces.

"CPA Party News," by Harry Winitsky [Nov. 15, 1919] Brief account of the doings of the Communist Party of Local Greater New York (CPA) by the Secretary of the local, Harry Winitsky. Winitsky notes that the general membership meeting of Local Greater New York had voted to tax all members of the party 1 day's wages to pay for legal expenses incurred as a result of the mass raids held on Nov. 7 and 8. Typewriters and desks had been maliciously destroyed by the raiders, a mimeograph machine seized, and party records taken, Winitsky states, adding that all branch organizers and financial secretaries were instructed to bring their records to party headquarters so that account files could be recreated by the financial committee. "The raiders also got the record of how many membership cards were given to every branch and the secretary is therefore not in a position to know how much money is due to the National Office for the Organization Fund, for which every member of the Communist Party was taxed 50 cents. The organizers of all branches are hereby instructed to immediately collect the 50 cents from every member and turn it in the local office," Winitsky adds.

“Long Live the Communist Party! 2,500 Seized in Raids,” by Maximilian Cohen [events of Nov. 7 to 11, 1919] The first mass operation directed against the fledgling American Communist movement by state and federal authorities came on the 2nd Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, a date which some seems to have been seen as the trigger date for a mass insurrection in America by some paranoid secret policemen. With its meeting times and locations published in its own open press, the Communist Party was an easy victim for the steamroller. Editor Max Cohen notes: “The authorities raided almost every headquarters in the city, smashed up offices furnished, gave everybody they found a free ride, seized records and literature, but the organization remains intact, and the Party membership unafraid or even astonished.” Cohen indicates that 2,500 were seized in the New York operation alone, with only 37 ultimately held -- including Ben Gitlow, Big Jim Larkin of the CLP, and Jay Lovestone, Louis Shapiro, and Henry C. Pearl of the CPA. Russian immigrants were a particular target of the operation, which included a brutal raid on the “Russian People’s House” of the anarchist Union of Russian Workers. Targets of the raid included also the offices of Novyi Mir, IWW Headquarters, a meeting of the Local Kings County of the Socialist Party (apparently raided in error), a YPSL package party, and branch offices of the CPA and Union of Russian Workers. In the aftermath a spate of hysterical misinformation ran in the bourgeois press, including a story in the Nov. 10 Morning World stating “there are 75,000 of the Communist Party in Greater New York alone” and remarking that a large bag of “black powder” had been “found” in the simultaneous raids in Cleveland.

“Minutes of the Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of America, Chicago—Nov. 15-17, 1919.” ** REVISED AND EXPANDED SECOND EDITION ** The plot thickens... Minutes of this second physical meeting of the Central Executive Committee housed in the Comintern Archive in Moscow are incomplete, omitting two very hot topics—discussion about bringing Ludwig Martens’ Soviet Russian Government Bureau in New York under CPA control and the expulsion of two branches for supporting the alternative program of the Michigan group, making participation in or support of the Proletarian University and the magazine *The Proletarian* expellable offenses. Whether the Moscow minutes were purposely shaved remains an open question. Old description: The second physical meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the old CPA reaffirmed the organization’s opposition to unity with the Communist Labor Party “on account of fundamental differences of principle.” It decided to send International Secretary Louis Fraina as soon as possible to establish contacts with the European communist movement and elected Nicholas Hourwich and C.E. Ruthenberg delegates to the forthcoming 2nd Congress of the Communist International (ultimately attended by alternate Alexander Stoklitsky in lieu of Ruthenberg). Charles Dirba was elected alternate National Secretary, should Ruthenberg be absent; Ruthenberg was named alternate Editor of Party Publications, should Ferguson and Fraina both be unable to serve; Jay Lovestone and Max Cohen were appointed Associate Editors, to fill editorial vacancies in that order. Ruthenberg was instructed to draft a letter to the Scandinavian and Finnish Federations calling upon them to join the Communist Party. Fraina, Hourwich, and Fred Friedman of the German Federation were named a committee of 3 to draft a statement on unity to the CLP. Executive Secretary Ruthenberg was also unanimously authorized to purchase a printing plant for party publications.

“Indicted.” by Marion E. Sproule [Nov. 15, 1919] Organized government efforts to decapitate

the radical movement was an ongoing process at least from 1917 onward, clearly predating the Palmer Raids of January 1920. Massachusetts State Secretary Marion E. Sproule of the Communist Party of America here provides a first-hand account of her indictment, arrest, and jailing for an October 19, 1919 speech entitled “Americanism and Communism,” in which she says that she attempted to show that “the true spirit of Americanism, as embodied in the writings and actions of men like William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and Horace Greeley is the spirit that today finds expression in the teachings of Communism.” Her speech was misreported in the capitalist press and an indictment was obtained under the May 28, 1919 Massachusetts “Anti-Anarchy Law,” which alleged that her speech “did advocate, advise and counsel and incite the unlawful destruction of real and personal property, and the overthrow by force and violence of the Government of the Commonwealth.” Sproule tells the story of how she was arrested at home at midnight on October 30, 1919, the authorities clearly springing a classic play from the Secret Policemen’s Handbook. She was then subjected to a comically inept five hour automobile ride in the middle of the night to cover the arduous 32 mile journey from her home in Lowell to Boston, where she was arraigned the next morning and held on \$2500 bond. Sproule ironically quotes Woodrow Wilson, who said: “We have forgotten the very principles of our origin if we have forgotten how to resist, how to agitate, how to pull down and build up, even to the extent of revolutionary practices, if need be, to readjust matters,” snidely noting that “It is evidently one thing for the President to say this and quite another for someone else to interpret it literally.”

“Report of the CLP Ohio State Secretary to the Ohio State Executive Committee, November 8, 1919,” by A. Wagenknecht. A report by the head of the Ohio state organization of the CLP to its governing State Executive Committee. Wagenknecht notes that the split in the socialist movement was an international phenomenon, made more complex in the United States by the premature formation of a Communist Party by various Socialist language federations ahead of the timetable set by the majority of the Left Wing National Conference. These federations seemed intent “to perpetuate their clique control” by resisting unity between the CPA and the CLP on the basis of equality. Wagenknecht stated the membership of the CPA would eventually push the CPA leadership towards unity; failing that, the federation of largely autonomous language groups “will disintegrate because of internal differences, and the best of its comrades will join the Communist Labor Party in time.” Wagenknecht mentions in passing a sub-group of the party not previously documented in the literature, the “Army of Liberators” “a cohort who seem to have done outreach work to trade unions to build popular support and action for the release of political prisoners. He resigns his post as State Secretary with this report, noting that the CLP was to shift its headquarters from Cleveland to New York City the following week, and that as Executive Secretary of the party he would thus be moving outside of the state. Wagenknecht is upbeat about the progress and prospects of the CLP organization in the Ohio.

“America or Anarchy? An Appeal to Red-Blooded Americans to Strike an Effective Blow for the Protection of the Country We Love from the Red Menace Which Shows Its Ugly Head on Every Hand,” by A. Mitchell Palmer. [Nov. 14, 1919] Attorney General of the United States A. Mitchell Palmer delivered this report to Congress, later published as a pamphlet. Palmer lamented the lack of any applicable law with which to prosecute individual radicals, due to the termination of the war and with it the Espionage Act. Despite this, Palmer

told Congress that under the auspices of the newly established “Radical Division” of his Justice Department “a more or less complete history of over 60,000 radically-inclined individuals has been gathered together and classified, and a foundation for action laid either under the deportation statutes or legislation to be enacted by Congress.” Undercover agents had been employed in information gathering activities, Palmer implied, and “a force of forty translators, readers, and assistants” was engaged rendering radical publications into English. Palmer counted 328 domestic and 144 imported radical newspapers and noted that the radical movement was targeting black Americans as a “particularly fertile ground for the spreading of their doctrines” “with some success.

“The Soviets and the IWW,” by I.E. Ferguson. [November 15, 1919] This article from the official organ of the Communist Party of America criticizes the Industrial Workers of the World for their inability to “transpose in their own minds” the concept of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The IWW fails to grasp the evolving nature of the soviets, Ferguson notes, instead describing them as “a makeshift substitute for industrial unions.” This failure to accept the real-world soviets and to insist upon theoretical perfection, makes the IWW “a perverse element in the labor movement” and brings it temporarily into alliance “with the Scheidemann-Ebert-Kautsky regime against the Communist movement, the cardinal principal of which is: All power to the Soviets.” Ferguson lambastes the IWW for failing to recognize that the real-world struggle of the proletariat for power will bring into being new forms of organization and management. The industrial union movement remains important in the class struggle, as does the industrial union form in the pre-revolutionary, pre-soviet state, Ferguson states, adding that the current IWW policy is marked by “an arrogant conceit” will ultimately “result in a miserable betrayal of all the splendid courage and sacrifice that have gone into the making of IWW history” unless the course is altered and unity based upon the Manifesto and Program of the Communist International achieved.

“Report of the Executive Secretary of the CPA: Submitted to the Central Executive Committee at Meeting of November 15, 1919,” by C.E. Ruthenberg. The Executive Secretary of the Communist Party of America briefly summarizes his activity during the first two months on the job for the governing Central Executive Committee of the CPA. Ruthenberg details direct mailings made to the locals and branches of the Socialist Party and its language federations—resulting in over five hundred CPA charters being issued to these bodies, brief accounts of the factional situation in the German, Finnish, and Scandinavian Socialist Federations, details the issuance of pamphlets and leaflets by the party, notes that subscribers to *The Communist* do not seem to be receiving their issues in the mail, and indicates that the party should consider acquisition of a printing plant immediately due to the production troubles ensuing from the party’s expulsion from three previous shops. Ruthenberg indicates receipts of just over \$16,800 and expenditures of about \$11,400 for the first 90 days of the CPA’s effective operation.

“Letter to Marguerite Browder in Kansas City, MO, from L.E. Katterfeld in Cleveland, Ohio, Nov. 16, 1919.” Letter to the sister of Earl Browder, Marguerite, from the Organization Director of the CLP, Ludwig Katterfeld. Katterfeld thanks Browder for passing along information

about Floyd Ramp's political intentions and suggests that he be drafted to write a pamphlet in conjunction with others behind bars at Leavenworth; since Ramp was soon to be released, he could "could bring much of it out [of prison] in his head." Katterfeld indicates that "We have many good pamphlets on Russia that we took over from the Socialist Publication Society in New York. What we need now are some pamphlets written by Americans who prove out of their experience as workers right here in this country the necessity for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and who draw their lessons and illustrations from fact with which the workers right here are familiar. Such a pamphlet it seems to me the comrades at Leavenworth could produce in short order." Katterfeld feels there would be "tremendous appeal" for such a project and passes along a title coined by his wife—"Bars and Stripes." No pamphlet on that topic or by that title was ever produced by the CLP, however.

"Ruthenberg Acquitted by Court Order at Cleveland: Cincinnati Socialists Raided," by Joseph W. Sharts [events of Nov. 18, 1919] News account by Joseph Sharts of the *Miami Valley Socialist* (Dayton, OH) reporting on two simultaneous events—the freeing of Cleveland radical leader C.E. Ruthenberg by judicial instruction on charges of having incited the May Day 1919 Cleveland Riot that resulted in 2 deaths and hundreds of injuries and arrests when a peaceful crowd was charged by club-swinging policemen on horseback and driving motor vehicles and beatings were administered by Right Wing thugs with police encouragement. At the same time that Ruthenberg was being released from the trumped-up charges preferred against him, Socialist Party headquarters in Cincinnati were gutted by a mob of Right Wing "100% American" "patriots." Sharts sees historical precedents for Right Wing mob action: "In all ages there have existed bands of bravados and swashbuckling bullies who have been in the pay of nobles and privileged classes and have sought to strike terror among the commons whose slowly accumulating strength has made the dominant families apprehensive," he states, noting that Rome, Renaissance Italy, Stuart England, and the old regimes of revolutionary France and Russia had made use of mob rule in defense of the old order.

"All Power to the Workers! Declaration Issued by the Communist Party, Local Greater New York." [Nov. 22, 1919] This is the official response of the Communist Party of Local New York to the mass police operation directed against it and other left wing organizations in New York City on Nov. 7, 1919. The statement declares that "the Communist Party cannot be broken by terrorism and violence. The Communist Party is accused of using force; but it is the forces of reaction that are using force against the Communist Party. The Communist Party is accused of fomenting terrorism; but we find that it is the reactionary forces that are using terrorism against the Communist Party. These acts of violence and terrorism come as a climax to the preparations made by the forces of 'law and order' -- the police and newspapers -- for a massacre of the Communist Party meeting on Rutgers Square, scheduled for November 8. The newspapers lyingly reported that the Communist Party was prepared to throw bombs, to use violence; lying reports circulated for the express purpose of creating a pretext for using force and violence against Communists and making a massacre." The attack on the Communist Party by the bourgeoisie and its agents was driven by an ulterior motive, the declaration indicates: "The real purpose of these acts of terrorism and despotism, worthy of the most brutal traditions of Tsarism, is not only to break the Communist Party, but to terrorize the workers, to crush their strikes, and to prevent the workers adopting more radical purposes in their struggles against the master class."

“Special Report on Radical Activities in the San Francisco District” by F.W. Kelly [Week Ending Nov. 22, 1919] Weekly Department of Justice intelligence report for the San Francisco district by Bureau of Investigation agent F.W. Kelly. Kelly details events in the ongoing Dockmen’s and Shipbuilders’ strikes, as well as repression against members of the Communist Labor Party and the IWW. With regard to the CLP, Kelly comments on the arrest in Oakland of J.E. Snyder, John Taylor, James Dolsen, and Max Bedacht, four leaders of the California organization. “These arrests the result of information from a confidential informant of this Department, to the effect that these men were plotting the organization of an inner circle for the purpose of killing three prominent citizens for every radical killed or injured by the activities of the American Legion,” reported Kelly. Details of repressive measures against the IWW are provided for five locales: Oakland, San Francisco, Eureka/Arcata, Sacramento, and Stockton. With regard to the latter, Kelly includes the text of a letter written to the District Attorney to apply pressure for fast and severe action. As a result of this pressure, “Mr. Van Vranken telephoned this Department that new indictments would be returned November 25th against all the defendants and that the bail would be materially raised and the prosecution thereafter expedited as rapidly as consistent.” More evidence of the way that the federal secret police apparatus, state law enforcement, and the legal establishment worked hand in hand in repressive activity against labor organizations and the organized left wing movement in this period.

“Application for Membership in the Communist International on Behalf of the Communist Party of America,” by Louis C. Fraina. [Nov. 11, 1919] In 1919, all four of the existing radical parties in America (CLP, CPA, PPA, SPA) made application for membership in the Third (Communist) International in Moscow. This is the document prepared by Louis C. Fraina on behalf of the Communist Party of America, outlining the history of the American movement and making that organization’s case for membership in the Comintern.

“Letter from Everett Marshall to Rose Pastor Stokes in New York, Nov. 27, 1919.” This poison pen letter from 100% American Everett Marshall to indicted radical Rose Pastor Stokes is a lovely specimen of the vicious, mean-spirited, racist ultra-nationalism from whence Cold War anti-communism sprang: “Ever since your clever but unsavory, and withal typical, personality thrust itself so obnoxiously upon our attention, I in common with many other ‘Americans in the manor born’ have watched your psychological horizon, so to speak, with the result that you have demonstrated clearly to us all the loathsome characteristics that are peculiar in your type and origin, but rarely met with in such completeness in any one individual as in yourself. The inbreeding of centuries of hate, treachery, ingratitude, rebellion, and mental and physical filth have crystallized into your distorted though clever mind and being creating—just you.... It is our sincere wish that after your prison term has been served that some means may be devised whereby you can be sent back to your nativity; if you could be clothed with the poverty, the rags, and the vermin that you brought here with you when you came it would be simple justice.... These few lines and moments that I care to spend on your behalf should impress upon you that the spirit of American is alive in the land, and that we

Americans will not rest until your whole nest of vipers is exterminated, by either prison terms, or deportation, or worse.”

DECEMBER

“To the Foreign Committee of the American Communist Party and the American Communist Labor Party. A Confidential Letter from the Executive Committee of the Communist International, circa December 1919.” One of the earliest communiques from the Communist International to the American communist movement. The letter indicates the ECCI had “received more or less exact information concerning your differences” from a “reliable and unbiased source” and that the differences between the two American communist parties were not based upon questions of program, but rather on questions of tactics and organization, particularly the place of parliamentarism and the relationship of the communists to the labor movement. The letter is particularly critical of the CPA’s position on both counts. With regards to parliamentarism, the need was for “a mass party, and not an isolated group” “an active force and not a narrow academic group.” The CPA is also implicitly singled out for its views regarding the Soviet Embassy, “there can be no question of his responsibility to any American organization even if it is largely or even exclusively composed of citizens of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic.” A split of the movement is “impossible and unthinkable,” the letter indicates, and the position of the CI on vital points of difference is hoped to be a basis for merger of the two American communist organizations.

“Crime, Violence, Terrorism and YOU!” [Defense leaflet of the Communist Labor Party] [Dec. 1919] From virtually the first day of their existence, the two American Communist Parties were subjected to a withering attack by the forces of so-called “law and order,” forcing the organizations to move to the defensive to aid their imprisoned comrades. This leaflet from the Communist Labor Party is quite a curiosity, dating from the last days before the Palmer Raids of Jan. 2/3, 1920 drove the organization into the underground. Thus, Executive Secretary Alfred Wagenknecht and the Central Executive Committee and officers of the CLP sign their real names to this appeal for funds. Wagenknecht charges that it is the capitalist state which is practicing crime and violence on the radical movement, behaving in the same manner as “the thief who stole a purse and then ran down the street crying, ‘Stop Thief! Stop Thief!’” Wagenknecht declares that “It’s a great game Capitalism is playing—but it won’t work. It’s not working. For every intelligent workers knows that Capitalism is but sounding its own retreat, its own defeat.” Wagenknecht continues that “victory for Soviet Russia is our victory. The workers of England, France, Italy, Germany, America helped to win the victory. Capitalism and its agencies covered the world with LIES about the victorious Russian workers. We nailed these lies and SPREAD THE TRUTH. And because the TRUTH ABOUT RUSSIA is winning, capitalism is becoming frantic, hysterical, violent. Arrests take place. Workers’ meeting places are looted. Mob rule is encouraged. The workers’ platform and press are gagged.” Wagenknecht asks for funds to defend those who have been taken by the state.

“Report on the New York City Communist Movement,” by M.J. Davis [Dec. 4, 1919] Beginning with an order issued by J. Edgar Hoover on Nov. 18, 1919, and throughout the

month of December, the Department of Justice's Bureau of Investigation gathered data on targets for a massive operation against non-citizen members of the Communist Party of America and the Communist Labor Party. This mass dragnet was to be conducted simultaneously through all 33 of the BoI's district offices and was ultimately launched on Jan. 2, 1920. This massive report by Special Agent M.J. Davis on the Communist movement is the epitome of this intelligence gathering operation. Davis lists the physical addresses of 78 branches of the CPA and the CLP (not differentiating between the organizations on the list); the names and physical addresses of a dozen Communist publications in the greater New York area; compiles a list of leaflets issued by the radical organizations of the city; and provides an alphabetical listing of 178 prominent Communist activists in the New York area, placing an emphasis upon members of the Russian and Jewish Communist Federations. The quality of the biographical information is not spectacular, but the job faced by the agent was vast and his performance notable.

“Letter to Anthony Caminetti, Commissioner General of Immigration from J. Edgar Hoover, Special Assistant to the Attorney General in Washington.” [Dec. 16, 1919] As Special Agents of the Bureau of Investigation gathered information about non-citizen members of the Communist movement in their locales, J. Edgar Hoover set the table for a mass operation to round up and deport the alien members of the organization, with a view to its annihilation in the same way that the anarchist Union of Russian Workers had been effectively liquidated in November and early December 1919. Hoover asks in this letter to Commissioner of Immigration Anthony Caminetti whether membership in the Communist Party will be viewed as a per se violation of the Immigration Act of Oct. 16, 1918, which “permits the deportation of a person who is a member of an organization advocating and teaching the overthrow by force and violence, the government of the United States,” Hoover says. “I would appreciate it if you would advise me of your ruling of this matter, as this Department is prepared to submit to you a considerable number of affidavits covering the activities of members of the Communist Party,” Hoover writes.

“Executive Motions of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America.” [submitted Dec. 17, 1919] During its few short months of legal existence, the early Communist Party of America conducted its executive business in the same manner as its predecessor, the Socialist Party of America—by mail through use of executive motions. Members of the Central Executive Committee would propose motions to the Executive Secretary, sometimes accompanied by comment; the Executive Secretary would distribute these motions to the members of the CEC, who would vote on the matter at hand by mail or (in rare emergency cases) by telegram. Two motions (#7 & #8) were initiated by Russian Federationist Nick Hourwich, aimed at starting an investigation of his old nemesis at the Russian Soviet Government Bureau, the Social Democrat Santeri Nuorteva, concerning Nuorteva's relationship to “the informer-agent of the Department of Justice” [Ferdinand Peterson], with a view of carrying documents on the matter to Moscow. A substitute motion is offered by Ruthenberg, putting aside the request for another investigation and instead ordering the distribution of the transcript of the Fraina party trial, in which the Nuorteva affair figured large, to Moscow for disposition. A final motion (#10) is put forward by Alex Bittelman, seeking to censure acting editor of The Communist I.E. Ferguson for ideological ad libbing in the pages of the official organ when he appended to an article his commentary, including the words “the

members of the Communist Party are among the most ardent supporters of the revolutionary industrial unionism of the IWW character.”

“Speech of Harry Winitsky at a Public Meeting in New York City, Dec. 22, 1919.” Harry Winitsky, Executive Secretary of Local Greater New York of the Communist Party of America, was free on bail at the time this speech was made, having been swept up in the Nov. 8 raids of the Lusk Committee on CPA headquarters. He spoke to a meeting of Communist Party members and friends in New York City in the immediate aftermath of the departure of the USS Buford to Soviet Russia with its cargo of “undesirable citizens.” Knowing full well that a Department of Justice stenographer was in the audience to take down his words, Winitsky is defiant: “We do not ask justice from the Lusk Committee. We do not expect any from them. We expect no justice from the capitalist class.... We recognize that there can be no justice as long as two classes exist in a capitalist country. We recognize that there must be and will be a dictatorship and it is up to us to choose whether we want the dictatorship of the capitalist class or whether we want the dictatorship of the working class....”

“”Wholesale Arrests of Communists in Buffalo: Headquarters of Communist Party Raided: Many Men and Two Women Arrested: Other Arrests to Be Expected” (The New Age) [events of Dec. 28, 1919] With the massive and misnamed “Palmer Raids” (planned and directed by J. Edgar Hoover) mere days their launch, the Lusk Committee of the New York Legislature conducted a raid of its own against the Communist Party of America’s organization in Buffalo, New York. This article from the Buffalo socialist newspaper The New Age documents the operation, which netted the arrest of 20 men and 2 women at Communist Party headquarters, located on Main Street in Buffalo. Those arrested and all CPA members were presumed guilty by authorities of having committed the crime of “criminal anarchism” for “subscribing to the constitution and manifesto of the party,” according to the news account. “The membership list of the organization is in the hands of the police and more arrests are to be expected,” the article notes.

“Cable to Bliss Morton, Bol Special Agent in Cleveland, from Frank Burke, Assistant Director and Chief of the Bureau of Investigation in Washington, DC.” [Dec. 30, 1919] Interesting cable sent to Agent in Charge of the Cleveland office of the Bureau of Investigation, Bliss Morton, answering a query as to whether the Bureau should make use of members of the Loyal American League, an ultra-nationalist vigilante organization, in conjunction with the forthcoming mass operation against the Communist Party of America and Communist Labor Party. The official answer, issued over the name of Bol Chief Frank Burke: “Do not use members of this organization or any gratuitous assistance in making these Communist roundups. Secure cooperation of police on receipt of instructions from me to take these subjects into custody.” Anecdotal evidence indicates that Right Wing vigilantes were used in various locales—this was, however, contrary to official policy, this communication indicates.

“Circular Letter to CPA Members from Charles Dirba, Acting Executive Secretary over

the Signature of C.E. Ruthenberg, Dec. 31, 1919.” With the coordinated mass dragnet remembered as the “Palmer Raids” imminent, the Bureau of Investigation opened by raiding the Chicago headquarters of the Communist Party of America and seizing its mailing list. This mimeographed letter from acting Executive Secretary Charles Dirba informs the party membership of the DoJ’s action. “Under ordinary circumstances and in law — this means nothing,” Dirba reassures the membership: “they can do nothing, just because they have found your name on a mailing list, no matter what list.” Dirba believes the mailing list seizure to be part of a plan to disrupt distribution of the CPA’s official organ, the weekly newspaper *The Communist*, and he asks for new addresses for bundle deliveries forthwith.

“First Telegram to Agents in Charge of Offices of the Bureau of Investigation, from J. Edgar Hoover in the name of Frank Burke, Assistant Director and Chief.” [Dec. 31, 1919] One of the great misnomers of early 20th Century American history is the designation of the coordinated anti-Communist raids of Jan. 2/3, 1920 as the “Palmer Raids,” after Attorney General Mitchell Palmer. In reality, the tactical commander at the head of the operation was Palmer’s young special assistant, J. Edgar Hoover. This is the first of two telegrams which Hoover sent on Wednesday, Dec. 31, 1919, to the various Special Agents in Charge of the Bureau of Investigation’s 33 offices. Hoover emphasizes the desirability of taking down any aliens who were connected with the editorial boards of Communist papers in each district—with a clear intent to decapitate the organizations and to render their reorganization difficult or impossible. Agents were also to get in touch with their local Immigration Inspectors on the morning of the mass operation so that they might work hand-in-hand in the roundup of Communist aliens. “Every effort should be made by you to definitely establish fact of subject being an alien and member of Communist Party or of Communist Labor Party before arrests. Policy of bureau is to have perfect cases rather than a large number of arrests,” Hoover insists. “No seizure of personal effects or belongings not necessary for evidence should be made by you. Documentary evidence connecting subject with party or documentary evidence on party is the only evidence which should be taken,” Hoover further instructs.

“Second Telegram to Agents in Charge of Offices of the Bureau of Investigation, from J. Edgar Hoover in the name of Frank Burke, Assistant Director and Chief.” [Dec. 31, 1919] This is the text of the second long telegram sent by J. Edgar Hoover to the various Special Agents in Charge of local offices of the Bureau of Investigation, issuing further instructions on the forthcoming January 2, 1920, raids targeting non-citizen members of the Communist Party of America and Communist Labor Party. Citizens were to be exempted from the dragnet, Hoover unmistakably states: “No arrests should be made of persons not aliens and who are not members of or affiliated with Communist Party of America or Communist Labor Party. Under no conditions are American citizens to be apprehended. Where any mistake of this nature is made and a citizen is taken into custody his case is to be immediately referred to state authority for action.” The Bureau itself was to provide the bulk of the manpower for the operation: “Effort has been made to supply sufficient agents for the purpose of carrying out arrests in your district. Assistance of local police authorities should only be used where absolutely necessary and should not be requested until a few hours before arrests in order to avoid any leak.” It was to be the two Communist Parties which were targeted, not the IWW or various anarchist organizations: “No arrests should be made of any persons connected with other organizations than the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party.” Hoover seems

to have had laughably unrealistic expectations for the pace of the operation. "Arrests should all be completed and examinations concluded by Saturday morning January 3rd, 1920," Hoover insists.